

**UNITED STATES BANKRUPTCY COURT FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF  
TEXAS, DALLAS DIVISION**

**In Re: Highland Capital Management, L.P.** § Case No. **19-34054-SGJ-11**

The Charitable DAF Fund LP §

Appellant § 22-03052

vs. §

**Highland Capital Management, L.P.** §

Appellee § **3:22-CV-02280-S**

**[43] Order granting amended motion to dismiss adversary proceeding with prejudice (related document # 19) Entered on 9/30/2022**

**APPELLANT RECORD**

**VOLUME 5**

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**IN THE UNITED STATES BANKRUPTCY COURT  
FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS  
DALLAS DIVISION**

In re:	§	Chapter 11
	§	
HIGHLAND CAPITAL MANAGEMENT, L.P.,	§	Case No. 19-34054-sgj11
	§	
Debtor.	§	
	§	
THE CHARITABLE DAF FUND, L.P.	§	
	§	
Plaintiff,	§	Adversary Proceeding No.
	§	
vs.	§	22-03052-sgj11
	§	
HIGHLAND CAPITAL MANAGEMENT, L.P.,	§	
	§	
Defendant.	§	
	§	

INDEX

**APPELLANT'S SECOND AMENDED STATEMENT OF ISSUES AND  
DESIGNATION OF RECORD ON APPEAL**

Pursuant to Rules 8009(a)(1)(A)-(B) and (a)(4) of the Federal Rules of Bankruptcy Procedure, The Charitable DAF Fund, L.P. ("Appellant") hereby designates the following items to be included in the record and identifies the following issues with respect to its appeal of the Order Granting Defendant's Amended Motion to Dismiss Adversary Proceeding [Doc.43] which

was entered by the United States Bankruptcy Court for the Northern District of Texas on September 30, 2022.

**I. STATEMENT OF ISSUES TO BE PRESENTED ON APPEAL**

Whether the Bankruptcy Court erred in granting Defendant's Amended Motion to Dismiss Adversary Proceeding.

**II. DESIGNATION OF ITEMS TO BE INCLUDED IN THE RECORD**

1. Notice of Appeal for Bankruptcy Case Adversary Proceeding No. 21-03067-sgj11 [Doc. 46].
2. The judgment, order, or decree appealed from: Order Granting Amended Motion to Dismiss Adversary Proceeding [Doc. 43].
3. Any opinion, findings of fact and conclusions of law of the bankruptcy court relating to the issues on appeal, including transcripts of all oral rulings: None.
3. Docket Sheet kept by the Bankruptcy Clerk.
4. Documents listed below and as described in the Docket Sheet for Bankruptcy Case Proceeding No. 22-03052-sgj.

No.	Date Filed	Docket No.	Description/Document Text
1	5/25/22 (7/22/21)	1	(18 pgs; 4 docs) Adversary case 22-03052. ORDER REFERRING CASE 3:21-CV-1710-N from U.S District Court for the Northern District of Texas, Dallas Division to U.S. Bankruptcy Court for Northern District of Texas, Dallas Division and Complaint by Charitable DAF Fund, LP against Highland Capital Management, L.P. Fee Amount \$350 (Attachments: # <u>1</u> Original Complaint # <u>2</u> Civil Cover Sheet # <u>3</u> Docket Sheet from 21-CV-1710). Nature(s) of suit: 02 (Other (e.g., other actions that would have been brought in state court if unrelated to bankruptcy)). (Okafor, Marcey)
2	5/25/22 (10/5/21)	8	(8 pgs; 2 docs) MOTION for Reconsideration re 7 Order on Motion to Stay (Highland Capital Management, L.P.'s Motion for Reconsideration of Stay Order) filed by Highland Capital Management LP (Attachments: # <u>1</u> Exhibit A) Attorney Zachery Z. Annable added to party Highland Capital Management LP(pty: dft) (Annable, Zachery) [ORIGINALLY FILED IN 21-CV-1710 AS #8 ON

Vol. 2  000066  000081  Thru Vol. 6				10/05/2021 IN U.S. DISTRICT COURT FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS, DALLAS DIVISION] (Okafor, Marcey)
	3	5/25/22 (10/5/21)	9	(15 pgs) Brief/Memorandum in Support filed by Highland Capital Management LP re 8 MOTION for Reconsideration re 7 Order on Motion to Stay (Highland Capital Management, L.P.'s Motion for Reconsideration of Stay Order) (Annable, Zachery) [ORIGINALLY FILED IN 21-CV-1710 AS #9 ON 10/05/2021 IN U.S. DISTRICT COURT FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS, DALLAS DIVISION] (Okafor, Marcey)
	4	5/25/22 (10/5/21)	10	(1012 pgs; 28 docs) Appendix in Support filed by Highland Capital Management LP re 8 MOTION for Reconsideration re 7 Order on Motion to Stay (Highland Capital Management, L.P.'s Motion for Reconsideration of Stay Order) (Attachments: # <u>1</u> Exhibit 1 # <u>2</u> Exhibit 2 # <u>3</u> Exhibit 3 # <u>4</u> Exhibit 4 # <u>5</u> Exhibit 5 # <u>6</u> Exhibit 6 # <u>7</u> Exhibit 7 # <u>8</u> Exhibit 8 # <u>9</u> Exhibit 9 # <u>10</u> Exhibit 10 # <u>11</u> Exhibit 11 # <u>12</u> Exhibit 12 # <u>13</u> Exhibit 13 # <u>14</u> Exhibit 14 # <u>15</u> Exhibit 15 # <u>16</u> Exhibit 16 # <u>17</u> Exhibit 17 # <u>18</u> Exhibit 18 # <u>19</u> Exhibit 19 # <u>20</u> Exhibit 20 # <u>21</u> Exhibit 21 # <u>22</u> Exhibit 22 # <u>23</u> Exhibit 23 # <u>24</u> Exhibit 24 # <u>25</u> Exhibit 25 # <u>26</u> Exhibit 26 # <u>27</u> Exhibit 27) (Annable, Zachery) [ORIGINALLY FILED IN 21-CV-1710 AS #10 ON 10/05/2021 IN U.S. DISTRICT COURT FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS, DALLAS DIVISION] (Okafor, Marcey)
Vol. 7  001093  001101  001111	5	5/25/22 (10/5/21)	11	(8 pgs; 2 docs) MOTION to Dismiss (Highland Capital Management, L.P.'s Motion to Dismiss) filed by Highland Capital Management LP (Attachments: # <u>1</u> Exhibit A) (Annable, Zachery) [ORIGINALLY FILED IN 21-CV-1710 AS #11 ON 10/05/2021 IN U.S. DISTRICT COURT FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS, DALLAS DIVISION] (Okafor, Marcey)
	6	5/25/22 (10/5/21)	12	(10 pgs) Brief/Memorandum in Support filed by Highland Capital Management LP re 11 MOTION to Dismiss (Highland Capital Management, L.P.'s Motion to Dismiss) (Annable, Zachery) [ORIGINALLY FILED IN 21-CV-1710 AS #12 ON 10/05/2021 IN U.S. DISTRICT COURT FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS, DALLAS DIVISION] (Okafor, Marcey)
	7	5/25/22 (10/5/21)	13	((238 pgs; 4 docs) Appendix in Support filed by Highland Capital Management LP re 11 MOTION to Dismiss (Highland Capital Management, L.P.'s Motion to Dismiss) (Attachments: # <u>1</u> Exhibit 1 # <u>2</u> Exhibit 2 # <u>3</u> Exhibit 3) (Annable, Zachery) [ORIGINALLY FILED IN 21-CV-1710

Vol. 8			AS #13 ON 10/05/2021 IN U.S. DISTRICT COURT FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS, DALLAS DIVISION] (Okafor, Marcey)
001349	8 5/25/22 (10/27/21)	15	(3 pgs) RESPONSE filed by Charitable DAF Fund LP re: 8 MOTION for Reconsideration re 7 Order on Motion to Stay (Highland Capital Management, L.P.'s Motion for Reconsideration of Stay Order) (Sbaiti, Mazin) [ORIGINALLY FILED IN 21-CV-1710 AS #15 ON 10/27/2021 IN U.S. DISTRICT COURT FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS, DALLAS DIVISION] (Okafor, Marcey)
001352	9 5/25/22 (11/5/21)	16	(7 pgs) REPLY filed by Highland Capital Management LP re: 8 MOTION for Reconsideration re 7 Order on Motion to Stay (Highland Capital Management, L.P.'s Motion for Reconsideration of Stay Order) (Annable, Zachery) [ORIGINALLY FILED IN 21-CV-1710 AS #16 ON 11/05/2021 IN U.S. DISTRICT COURT FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS, DALLAS DIVISION] (Okafor, Marcey)
001359	10 5/25/22 (11/21/21)	18	(2 pgs) ORDER re: 8 Motion for Reconsideration. The Court grants Defendant's motion, lifts the stay, and refers this case to Judge Stacey G.C. Jernigan of the United States Bankruptcy Court for the Northern District of Texas, to be adjudicated as a matter related to the Chapter 11 Bankruptcy of HCM., Chapter 11 Case No. 10-34054. The Clerk of this Court and the Clerk of the Bankruptcy Court to which this case is referred are directed to take such actions as are necessary to docket this matter as an Adversary Proceeding associated with the aforementioned consolidated bankruptcy case. (Ordered by Judge David C Godbey on 5/19/2022) (oyh) (Main Document 18 replaced on 5/23/2022) (twd). (Entered: 05/20/2022) [ORIGINALLY FILED IN 21-CV-1710 AS #18 ON 11/21/2021 IN U.S. DISTRICT COURT FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS, DALLAS DIVISION] (*ERROR IN ENTRY: CORRECT CASE NUMBER IS: 19-34054*) (Okafor, Marcey)
001361	11 5/27/22	19	(8 pgs; 2 docs) Amended Motion to dismiss adversary proceeding (related document(s): <u>11</u> ) filed by Defendant Highland Capital Management, L.P. (Attachments:# <u>1</u> Exhibit A--Proposed Order) (Annable, Zachery)
001369	12 5/27/22	20	(12 pgs) Brief in support filed by Defendant Highland Capital Management, L.P. (RE: related document(s) <u>19</u> Amended Motion to dismiss adversary proceeding (related document(s): <u>11</u> )). (Annable, Zachery)
001381	13 5/27/22	21	(637 pgs) Support/supplemental document ( <i>Appendix in Support of Highland Capital Management, L.P.'s Amended</i>

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				Motion to Dismiss) filed by Defendant Highland Capital Management, L.P. (RE: related document(s) <u>19</u> Amended Motion to dismiss adversary proceeding (related document(s): <u>11</u> )). (Annable, Zachery)
Vol. 11	14	6/1/22	23	(6 pgs; 2 docs) Notice of hearing filed by Defendant Highland Capital Management, L.P. (RE: related document(s) <u>19</u> Motion to dismiss adversary proceeding filed by Defendant Highland Capital Management, L.P.). Hearing to be held on 8/3/2022 at 02:30 PM at <a href="https://us.courts.webex.com/meet/jerniga">https://us.courts.webex.com/meet/jerniga</a> for <u>19</u> and for <u>19</u> , (Attachments: # <u>1</u> Exhibit A)(Hayward, Melissa)
002018				
	15	7/5/22	30	(12 pgs) Response opposed to (related document(s): <u>19</u> Amended Motion to dismiss adversary proceeding (related document(s): <u>11</u> ) filed by Defendant Highland Capital Management, L.P.) filed by Plaintiff Charitable DAF Fund, LP. (Ecker, C.) (Entered: 07/06/2022)
002024				
	16	7/26/22	31	(15 pgs) Reply to (related document(s): <u>30</u> Response filed by Plaintiff Charitable DAF Fund, LP) filed by Defendant Highland Capital Management, L.P.. (Annable, Zachery)
002036				
	17	7/26/22	32	(865 pgs) Support/supplemental document ( <i>Amended Appendix in Support of Highland Capital Management, L.P.'s Amended Motion to Dismiss</i> ) filed by Defendant Highland Capital Management, L.P. (RE: related document(s) <u>21</u> Support/supplemental document). (Annable, Zachery)
002051				
Thru Vol 14				
Vol. 15	18	8/1/22	34	(867 pgs; 23 docs) Witness and Exhibit List ( <i>Reorganized Debtor's Witness and Exhibit List with Respect to Evidentiary Hearing to Be Held on August 3, 2022</i> ) filed by Defendant Highland Capital Management, L.P. (RE: related document(s) <u>19</u> Amended Motion to dismiss adversary proceeding (related document(s): <u>11</u> )). (Attachments: # <u>1</u> Exhibit 1 # <u>2</u> Exhibit 2 # <u>3</u> Exhibit 3 # <u>4</u> Exhibit 4 # <u>5</u> Exhibit 5 # <u>6</u> Exhibit 6 # <u>7</u> Exhibit 7 # <u>8</u> Exhibit 8 # <u>9</u> Exhibit 9 # <u>10</u> Exhibit 10 # <u>11</u> Exhibit 11 # <u>12</u> Exhibit 12 # <u>13</u> Exhibit 13 # <u>14</u> Exhibit 14 # <u>15</u> Exhibit 15 # <u>16</u> Exhibit 16 # <u>17</u> Exhibit 17 # <u>18</u> Exhibit 18 # <u>19</u> Exhibit 19 # <u>20</u> Exhibit 20 # <u>21</u> Exhibit 21 # <u>22</u> Exhibit 22) (Annable, Zachery)
002916				
Thru Vol. 18				
Vol. 19	19	8/3/22	40	(1 pg) Court admitted exhibits date of hearing August 3, 2022 (RE: related document(s) <u>19</u> Amended Motion to dismiss adversary proceeding (related document(s): <u>11</u> ) filed by Defendant Highland Capital Management, L.P. (Attachments: # <u>1</u> Exhibit A--Proposed Order)) COURT ADMITTED EXHIBIT 17. COURT TOOK JUDICIAL NOTICE OF EXHIBITS 1-13, 21 AND 22. (Ellison, T.) (Entered: 08/04/2022)
003783				
Thru Vol. 22				



Vol. 22 004651	20	9/30/22	42	(28 pgs) Memorandum of opinion regarding Defendant's amended motion to dismiss adversary proceeding (RE: related document(s) <u>19</u> Motion to dismiss adversary proceeding filed by Defendant Highland Capital Management, L.P.). Entered on 9/30/2022 (Okafor, Marcey)
004679	21	8/4/22	41	41 Transcript regarding Hearing Held 08/03/2022 (45 pages) RE: Motion to Dismiss Adversary Proceeding (19). THIS TRANSCRIPT WILL BE MADE ELECTRONICALLY AVAILABLE TO THE GENERAL PUBLIC 90 DAYS AFTER THE DATE OF FILING. TRANSCRIPT RELEASE DATE IS 11/2/2022. Until that time the transcript may be viewed at the Clerk's Office or a copy may be obtained from the official court transcriber. Court Reporter/Transcriber Kathy Rehling, kathyrehlingtranscripts@gmail.com, Telephone number 972-786-3063. (RE: related document(s) <u>37</u> Hearing held on 8/3/2022. (RE: related document(s) <u>19</u> Amended Motion to dismiss adversary proceeding (related document(s): <u>11</u> ) filed by Defendant Highland Capital Management, L.P.) (Appearances: G. Demo and Z. Annabel for Movant/Highland; J. Bridges for Respondant/Charitable DAF. Evidentiary hearing. Motion granted. Court to issue Opinion and Order.)). Transcript to be made available to the public on 11/2/2022. (Rehling, Kathy)

Dated: November 28, 2022

Respectfully submitted,

**SBAITI & COMPANY PLLC**

/s/ Mazin A. Sbaiti

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**Counsel for Appellant**

**CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE**

I hereby certify that a true and correct copy of the foregoing document was filed electronically through the Court's ECF system, which provides notice to all parties of interest, on this 28<sup>th</sup> day of November, 2022.

/s/ Mazin A. Sbaiti  
Mazin A. Sbaiti



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# EXHIBIT B

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IN THE UNITED STATES BANKRUPTCY COURT  
FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS  
DALLAS DIVISION

In Re: ) **Case No. 19-34054-sgj-11**  
) Chapter 11  
)  
HIGHLAND CAPITAL ) Dallas, Texas  
MANAGEMENT, L.P., ) Monday, February 8, 2021  
) 9:00 a.m. Docket  
Debtor. )  
) BENCH RULING ON CONFIRMATION  
) HEARING [1808] AND AGREED  
) MOTION TO ASSUME [1624]  
)

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS  
BEFORE THE HONORABLE STACEY G.C. JERNIGAN,  
UNITED STATES BANKRUPTCY JUDGE.

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EXHIBIT B

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2

1 APPEARANCES, cont'd.:

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transcript produced by transcription service.

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3

1 DALLAS, TEXAS - FEBRUARY 8, 2021 - 9:08 A.M.

2 THE COURT: Please be seated.

3 (Beeping.)

4 THE COURT: Someone needs to turn off their whatever.

5 All right. Good morning. This is Judge Jernigan, and we  
6 have scheduled today a bench ruling regarding the Debtor's  
7 plan that we had a confirmation trial on last week. This is  
8 Highland Capital Management, LP, Case No. 19-34054.

9 Let me first make sure we've got Debtor's counsel on the  
10 line. Do we have --

11 MR. POMERANTZ: Yes.

12 THE COURT: -- Mr. Pomerantz?

13 MR. POMERANTZ: Yes, Your Honor. Good morning, Your  
14 Honor. Jeff Pomerantz; Pachulski Stang Ziehl & Jones; on  
15 behalf of the Debtor.

16 THE COURT: Okay. Good morning. Do we have the  
17 Creditors' Committee on the phone?

18 MR. CLEMENTE: Good morning, Your Honor. Matthew  
19 Clemente of Sidley Austin on behalf of the Creditors'  
20 Committee.

21 THE COURT: Good morning. All right. We had various  
22 Objectors. Do we have Mr. Dondero's counsel on the phone?

23 MR. LYNN: Yes, Your Honor. Michael Lynn, together  
24 with John Bonds and Bryan Assink, for Jim Dondero.

25 THE COURT: Good morning. For the Trusts, the

1 Dugaboy and Get Good Trusts, do we have Mr. Draper?

2 MR. DRAPER: Yes. Douglas Draper is on the line,  
3 Your Honor.

4 THE COURT: Good morning. Now, for what I'll call  
5 the Funds and Advisor Objectors, do we have Mr. Rukavina and  
6 your crew on the line?

7 MR. RUKAVINA: Davor Rukavina. And Lee Hogewood is  
8 also on the line.

9 THE COURT: All right. Good morning to you. All  
10 right. And we had objections pending from the U.S. Trustee as  
11 well. Do we have the U.S. Trustee on the line?

12 (No response.)

13 THE COURT: All right. If you're appearing, you're  
14 on mute. We're not hearing you.

15 All right. Well, we have lots of other folks. I don't  
16 mean to be neglectful of them, but we're going to get on with  
17 the ruling this morning. This is going to take a while. This  
18 is a complex matter, so it should take a while.

19 All right. Before the Court, of course, for consideration  
20 is the Debtor's Fifth Amended Plan, first filed on November  
21 24, 2020, as later modified on or around January 22, 2021,  
22 with more amendments filed on or around February 1, 2021. The  
23 Court will hereinafter refer to this as the "Plan."

24 The parties refer to the Plan as a monetization plan  
25 because it involves the gradual wind-down of the Debtor's

1 assets and certain of its funds over time, with the  
2 Reorganized Debtor continuing to manage certain other funds  
3 for a while, under strict governance and monitoring, and a  
4 Claimants Trust will receive the proceeds of that process,  
5 with the creditors receiving an interest in that trust. There  
6 is also anticipated to be Litigation Sub-Trust established for  
7 the purpose of pursuing certain avoidance or other causes of  
8 action for the benefit of creditors.

9 The recovery for general unsecured creditors is estimated  
10 now at 71 percent.

11 The Plan was accepted by 99.8 percent of the dollar amount  
12 of voting creditors in Class 8, the general unsecured class,  
13 but as to numerosity, a majority of the class of general  
14 unsecured creditors did not vote in favor of the plan.  
15 Specifically, 27 claimants voted no and 17 claimants voted  
16 yes. All but one of the rejecting ballots were cast by  
17 employees who, according to the Debtor, are unlikely to have  
18 allowed claims because they are asserted for bonuses or other  
19 compensation that will not become due.

20 Meanwhile, in a convenience class, Class 7, of general  
21 unsecured claims under one million dollars, one hundred  
22 percent of the 16 claimants who chose to vote in that class  
23 chose to accept the Plan.

24 Because of the rejecting votes in Class 8, and because of  
25 certain objections to the Plan, the Court heard two full days



1 of evidence, considering testimony from five witnesses and  
2 thousands of pages of documentary evidence, in considering  
3 whether to confirm the Plan pursuant to Sections 1129(a) and  
4 (b) of the Bankruptcy Code.

5 The Court finds and concludes that the Plan meets all of  
6 the relevant requirements of Sections 1123, 1124, and 1129 of  
7 the Code, and other applicable provisions of the Bankruptcy  
8 Code, but is issuing this detailed ruling to address certain  
9 pending objections to the Plan, including but not limited to  
10 objections regarding certain Exculpations, Releases, Plan  
11 Injunctions, and Gatekeeping Provisions of the Plan.

12 The Court reserves the right to amend or supplement this  
13 oral ruling in more detailed findings of fact, conclusions of  
14 law, and an Order.

15 First, by way of introduction, this case is not your  
16 garden-variety Chapter 11 case. Highland Capital Management,  
17 LP is a multibillion dollar global investment advisor,  
18 registered with the SEC pursuant to the Investment Advisers  
19 Act of 1940. It was founded in 1993 by James Dondero and Mark  
20 Okada. Mr. Okada resigned from his role with Highland prior  
21 to the bankruptcy case being filed. Mr. Dondero was in  
22 control of the Debtor as of the day it filed bankruptcy, but  
23 agreed to relinquish control of it on or about January 9,  
24 2020, pursuant to an agreement reached with the Official  
25 Unsecured Creditors' Committee, which will be described later.

1 Although Mr. Dondero remained on as an unpaid employee and  
2 portfolio manager with the Debtor after January 9, 2020, his  
3 employment with the Debtor terminated on October 9, 2020. Mr.  
4 Dondero continues to work for and essentially control numerous  
5 nondebtor companies in the Highland complex of companies.

6 The Debtor is headquartered in Dallas, Texas. As of the  
7 October 2019 petition date, the Debtor employed approximately  
8 76 employees.

9 Pursuant to various contractual arrangements, the Debtor  
10 provides money management and advisory services for billions  
11 of dollars of assets, including CLOs and other investments.  
12 Some of these assets are managed pursuant to shared services  
13 agreements with a variety of affiliated entities, including  
14 other affiliated registered investment advisors. In fact,  
15 there are approximately 2,000 entities in the Byzantine  
16 complex of companies under the Highland umbrella.

17 None of these affiliates of Highland filed for Chapter 11  
18 protection. Most, but not all, of these entities are not  
19 subsidiaries, direct or indirect, of Highland. And certain  
20 parties in the case preferred not to use the term "affiliates"  
21 when referring to them. Thus, the Court will frequently refer  
22 loosely to the so-called, in air quotes, "Highland complex of  
23 companies" when referring to the Highland enterprise. That's  
24 a term many of the lawyers in the case use.

25 Many of the companies are offshore entities, organized in

1 such faraway jurisdictions as the Cayman Islands and Guernsey.

2 The Debtor is privately owned 99.5 percent by an entity  
3 called Hunter Mountain Investment Trust; 0.1866 percent by the  
4 Dugaboy Investment Trust, a trust created to manage the assets  
5 of Mr. Dondero and his family; 0.0627 percent by Mark Okada,  
6 personally and through family trusts; and 0.25 percent by  
7 Strand Advisors, Inc., the general partner.

8 The Debtor's primary means of generating revenue has  
9 historically been from fees collected for the management and  
10 advisory services provided to funds that it manages, plus fees  
11 generated for services provided to its affiliates.

12 For additional liquidity, the Debtor, prior to the  
13 petition date, would sell liquid securities in the ordinary  
14 course, primarily through a brokerage account at Jefferies,  
15 LLC. The Debtor would also, from time to time, sell assets at  
16 nondebtor subsidiaries and distribute those proceeds to the  
17 Debtor in the ordinary course of business.

18 The Debtor's current CEO, James Seery, credibly testified  
19 that the Debtor was "run at a deficient for a long time and  
20 then would sell assets or defer employee compensation to cover  
21 its deficits." This Court cannot help but wonder if that was  
22 necessitated because of enormous litigation fees and expenses  
23 that Highland was constantly incurring due to its culture of  
24 litigation, as further addressed hereafter.

25 Highland and this case are not garden-variety for so many

1 reasons. One is the creditor constituency. Highland did not  
2 file bankruptcy because of some of the typical reasons a large  
3 company files Chapter 11. For example, it did not have a  
4 large asset-based secured lender with whom it was in default.  
5 It only had relatively insignificant secured indebtedness  
6 owing to Jefferies, with whom it had a brokerage account, and  
7 one other entity called Frontier State Bank.

8 Highland did not have problems with trade vendors or  
9 landlords. It did not suffer any type of catastrophic  
10 business calamity. In fact, it filed Chapter 11 six months  
11 before the COVID-19 pandemic was declared. The Debtor filed  
12 Chapter 11 due to a myriad of massive unrelated business  
13 litigation claims that it was facing, many of which had  
14 finally become liquidated or were about to become liquidated  
15 after a decade or more of contentious litigation in multiple  
16 fora all over the world.

17 The Unsecured Creditors' Committee in this case has  
18 referred to the Debtor under its former chief executive, Mr.  
19 Dondero, as a serial litigator. This Court agrees with that  
20 description. By way of example, the members of the Creditors'  
21 Committee and their history of litigation with the Debtor and  
22 others in the Highland complex are as follows:

23 First, the Redeemer Committee of the Highland Crusader  
24 Fund, which I'll call the Redeemer Committee. This Creditors'  
25 Committee member obtained an arbitration award against the

1 Debtor of more than \$190 million, inclusive of interest,  
2 approximately five months before the petition date from a  
3 panel of the American Arbitration Association. It was on the  
4 verge of having that award confirmed by the Delaware Chancery  
5 Court immediately prior to the petition date, after years of  
6 disputes that started in late 2008 and included legal  
7 proceedings in Bermuda. This creditor's claim was settled  
8 during the bankruptcy case in the amount of approximately  
9 \$137.7 million. The Court is omitting various details and  
10 aspects of that settlement.

11 The second Creditors' Committee member, Acis Capital  
12 Management, LP, which was formerly in the Highland complex of  
13 companies but was not affiliated with Highland as of the  
14 petition date. This UCC member and its now-owner, Josh Terry,  
15 were involved in litigation with Highland dating back to 2016.  
16 Acis was forced into an involuntary bankruptcy in the  
17 Bankruptcy Court for the Northern District of Texas, Dallas  
18 Division, by Josh Terry, who was a former Highland portfolio  
19 manager, in 2018 after Josh Terry obtained an approximately \$8  
20 million arbitration award and judgment against Acis that was  
21 issued by a state court in Dallas County, Texas. Josh Terry  
22 was ultimately awarded the equity ownership of Acis by the  
23 Dallas Bankruptcy Court in the Acis bankruptcy case.

24 Acis subsequently asserted a multimillion dollar claim  
25 against Highland in the Dallas Bankruptcy Court for Highland's

1 alleged denuding of Acis in fraud of its creditors, primarily  
2 Josh Terry.

3 The litigation involving Acis and Mr. Terry dates back to  
4 mid-2016, and has continued on, with numerous appeals of  
5 bankruptcy court orders, including one appeal still pending at  
6 the United States Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit.

7 There was also litigation involving Josh Terry and Acis in  
8 the Royal Court of the Island of Guernsey and in a court in  
9 New York.

10 The Acis claim was settled during this bankruptcy case in  
11 court-ordered mediation for approximately \$23 million. Other  
12 aspects and details of this settlement are being omitted.

13 Now, the third Creditors' Committee member, UBS  
14 Securities. It's a creditor who filed a proof of claim in the  
15 amount of \$1,039,000,000 in the Highland case. Yes, over one  
16 billion dollars. The UBS claim was based on the amount of a  
17 judgment that UBS received from a New York state court in 2020  
18 after a multi-week bench trial which had occurred many months  
19 earlier on a breach of contract claim against other entities  
20 in the Highland complex. UBS alleged that the Debtor should  
21 be liable for the judgment. The UBS litigation related to  
22 activities that occurred in 2008. The litigation involving  
23 UBS and Highland and its affiliates was pending for more than  
24 a decade, there having been numerous interlocutory appeals  
25 during its history.



1 The Debtor and UBS recently announced a settlement of the  
2 UBS claim, which came a few months after court-ordered  
3 mediation. The settlement is in the amount of \$50 million as  
4 a general unsecured claim, \$25 million as a subordinated  
5 claim, and \$18 million of cash coming from a nondebtor entity  
6 in the Highland complex known as Multistrat. Other aspects of  
7 this settlement are being omitted.

8 The fourth and last Creditors' Committee member is Meta-e  
9 Discovery. It is a vendor who happened to supply litigation  
10 and discovery-related services to the Debtor over the years.  
11 It had unpaid invoices on the petition date of more than  
12 \$779,000.

13 It is fair to say that the members of the Creditors'  
14 Committee in this case all have wills of steel. They fought  
15 hard before and during the bankruptcy case. The members of  
16 the Creditors' Committee are highly sophisticated and have had  
17 highly sophisticated professionals representing them. They  
18 have represented their constituency in this case as  
19 fiduciaries extremely well.

20 In addition to these Creditors Committee members, who were  
21 all embroiled in years of litigation with Highland and its  
22 affiliates in various ways, the Debtor has been in litigation  
23 with Patrick Daugherty, a former limited partner and employee  
24 of Highland, for many years in both Delaware and Texas state  
25 courts. Patrick Daugherty filed a proof of claim for "at

1 least \$37.4 million" relating to alleged breached employment-  
2 related agreements and for the tort of defamation arising from  
3 a 2017 press release posted by the Debtor.

4 The Debtor and Patrick Daugherty recently announced a  
5 settlement of the Patrick Daugherty claim in the amount of  
6 \$750,000 cash on the effective date, an \$8.25 million general  
7 unsecured claim, and a \$2.75 million subordinated claim.  
8 Other aspects and details of this settlement are being  
9 omitted.

10 Additionally, an entity known as HarbourVest, who invested  
11 more than \$70 million with an entity in the Highland complex,  
12 asserted a \$300 million proof of claim against Highland,  
13 alleging, among other things, fraud and RICO violations. The  
14 HarbourVest claim was settled during the bankruptcy case for a  
15 \$45 million general unsecured claim and a \$35 million junior  
16 claim.

17 Other than these claims just described, most of the other  
18 claims in this case are claims asserted against the Debtor by  
19 other entities in the Highland complex, most of which entities  
20 the Court finds to be controlled by Mr. Dondero; claims of  
21 employees who believe that they are entitled to large bonuses  
22 or other types of deferred compensation; and claims of  
23 numerous law firms that did work for Highland and were unpaid  
24 for amounts due to them on the petition date.

25 Yet another reason this is not your garden-variety Chapter

1 11 case is its postpetition corporate governance structure.  
2 Highland filed bankruptcy October 16, 2019. Contentiousness  
3 with the Creditors' Committee began immediately, with first  
4 the Committee's request for a change of venue from Delaware to  
5 Dallas, and then a desire by the Committee and the U.S.  
6 Trustee for a Chapter 11 or 7 trustee to be appointed due to  
7 concerns over and distrust of Mr. Dondero and his numerous  
8 conflicts of interest and alleged mismanagement or worse.

9 After many weeks of the threat of a trustee lingering, the  
10 Debtor and the Creditors' Committee negotiated and the Court  
11 approved a corporate governance settlement on January 9, 2020  
12 that resulted in Mr. Dondero no longer being an officer or  
13 director of the Debtor or of its general partner, Strand.

14 As part of the court-approved settlement, three eminently-  
15 qualified Independent Directors were chosen by the Creditors'  
16 Committee and engaged to lead Highland through its Chapter 11  
17 case. They were James Seery, John Dubel, and Retired  
18 Bankruptcy Judge Russell Nelms. They were technically the  
19 Independent Directors of Strand, the general partner of the  
20 Debtor. Mr. Dondero had previously been the sole director of  
21 Strand, and thus the sole person in ultimate control of the  
22 Debtor.

23 The three independent board members' resumes are in  
24 evidence. James Seery eventually was named CEO of the Debtor.  
25 Suffice it to say that this changed the entire trajectory of

1 the case. This saved the Debtor from a trustee. The Court  
2 trusted the new directors. The Creditors' Committee trusted  
3 them. They were the right solution at the right time.

4 Because of the unique character of the Debtor's business,  
5 the Court believed this solution was far better than a  
6 conventional Chapter 7 or 11 trustee. Mr. Seery, in  
7 particular, knew and had vast experience at prominent firms  
8 with high-yield and distressed investing similar to the  
9 Debtor's business. Mr. Dubel had 40 years of experience  
10 restructuring large, complex businesses and serving on their  
11 boards of directors in this context. And Retired Judge Nelms  
12 had not only vast bankruptcy experience but seemed  
13 particularly well-suited to help the Debtor maneuver through  
14 conflicts and ethical quandaries.

15 By way of comparison, in the Chapter 11 case of Acis, the  
16 former affiliate of Highland that this Court presided over two  
17 or three years ago, which company was much smaller in size and  
18 scope than Highland, managing only five or six CLOs, a Chapter  
19 11 trustee was elected by the creditors that was not on the  
20 normal rotation panel for trustees in this district, but  
21 rather was a nationally-known bankruptcy attorney with more  
22 than 45 years of large Chapter 11 case experience. This  
23 Chapter 11 trustee performed valiantly, but was sued by  
24 entities in the Highland complex shortly after he was  
25 appointed, which this Court had to address. The Acis trustee

1 could not get Highland and its affiliates to agree to any  
2 actions taken in the case, and he finally obtained  
3 confirmation of a plan over Highland and its affiliates'  
4 objections in his fourth attempted plan, which confirmation  
5 then was promptly appealed by Highland and its affiliates.

6 Suffice it to say it was not easy to get such highly-  
7 qualified persons to serve as independent board members and  
8 CEO of this Debtor. They were stepping into a morass of  
9 problems. Naturally, they were worried about getting sued, no  
10 matter how defensible their efforts might be, given the  
11 litigation culture that enveloped Highland historically. It  
12 seemed as though everything always ended in litigation at  
13 Highland.

14 The Court heard credible testimony that none of them would  
15 have taken on the role of Independent Director without a good  
16 D&O insurance policy protecting them, without indemnification  
17 from Strand, guaranteed by the Debtor; without exculpation for  
18 mere negligence claims; and without a gatekeeper provision,  
19 such that the Independent Directors could not be sued without  
20 the bankruptcy court, as a gatekeeper, giving a potential  
21 plaintiff permission to sue.

22 With regard to the gatekeeper provision, this was  
23 precisely analogous to what bankruptcy trustees have pursuant  
24 to the so-called "Barton Doctrine," which was first  
25 articulated in an old U.S. Supreme Court case.

1 The Bankruptcy Court approved all of these protections in  
2 a January 9, 2020 order. No one appealed that order. And Mr.  
3 Dondero signed the settlement agreement that was approved by  
4 that order.

5 An interesting fact about the D&O policy came out in  
6 credible testimony at the confirmation hearing. Mr. Dubel and  
7 an insurance broker from Aon, named Marc Tauber, both credibly  
8 testified that the gatekeeper provision was needed because of  
9 the so-called, and I quote, "Dondero Exclusion" in the  
10 insurance marketplace.

11 Specifically, the D&O insurers in the marketplace did not  
12 want to cover litigation claims that might be brought against  
13 the Independent Directors by Mr. Dondero because the  
14 marketplace of D&O insurers are aware of Mr. Dondero's  
15 litigiousness. The insurers would not have issued a D&O  
16 policy to the Independent Directors without either the  
17 gatekeeping provision or a "Dondero Exclusion" being in the  
18 policy.

19 Thus, the gatekeeper provision was part of the January 9,  
20 2020 settlement. There was a sound business justification for  
21 it. It was reasonable and necessary. It was consistent with  
22 the Barton Doctrine in an extremely analogous situation --  
23 i.e., the independent board members were analogous to a three-  
24 headed trustee in this case, if you will. Mr. Dondero signed  
25 off on it. And, again, no one ever appealed the order



1 approving it.

2 The Court finds that, like the Creditors' Committee, the  
3 independent board members here have been resilient and  
4 unwavering in their efforts to get the enormous problems in  
5 this case solved. They seem to have at all times negotiated  
6 hard and with good faith. As noted previously, they changed  
7 the entire trajectory of this case.

8 Still another reason why this was not your garden-variety  
9 case was the mediation effort. In summer of 2020, roughly  
10 nine months into the Chapter 11 case, this Court ordered  
11 mediation among the Debtor, Acis, UBS, the Redeemer Committee,  
12 and Mr. Dondero. The Court selected co-mediators, since this  
13 seemed like such a Herculean task, especially during COVID-19,  
14 where people could not all be in the same room. Those co-  
15 mediators were Retired Bankruptcy Judge Allan Gropper from the  
16 Southern District of New York, who had a distinguished career  
17 presiding over complex Chapter 11 cases, and Ms. Sylvia Mayer,  
18 who likewise has had a distinguished career, first as a  
19 partner in a preeminent law firm working on complex Chapter 11  
20 cases, and subsequently as a mediator and arbitrator in  
21 Houston, Texas.

22 As noted earlier, the Acis claim was settled during the  
23 mediation, which seemed nothing short of a miracle to this  
24 Court, and the UBS claim was settled many months later, and  
25 this Court believes the groundwork for that ultimate

1 settlement was laid, or at least helped, through the  
2 mediation. And as earlier noted, other enormous claims have  
3 been settled during this case, including that of the Redeemer  
4 Committee, who, again, had asserted approximately or close to  
5 a \$200 million claim; HarbourVest, who asserted a \$300 million  
6 claim; and Patrick Daugherty, who asserted close to a \$40  
7 million claim.

8 This Court cannot stress strongly enough that the  
9 resolution of these enormous claims and the acceptance of all  
10 of these creditors of the Plan that is now before the Court  
11 seems nothing short of a miracle. It was more than a year in  
12 the making.

13 Finally, a word about the current remaining Objectors to  
14 the Plan before the Court. Once again, the Court will use the  
15 phrase "not garden-variety." Originally, there were over one  
16 dozen objections filed to this Plan. The Debtor has made  
17 various amendments or modifications to the Plan to address  
18 some of these objections. The Court finds that none of these  
19 modifications require further solicitation, pursuant to  
20 Sections 1125, 1126, 1127 of the Code, or Bankruptcy Rule  
21 3019, because, among other things, they do not materially  
22 adversely change the treatment of the claims of any creditor  
23 or interest holder who has not accepted in writing the  
24 modifications.

25 Among other things, there were changes to the projections

1 that the Debtor filed shortly before the confirmation hearing  
2 that, among other things, show the estimated distribution to  
3 creditors and compare plan treatment to a likely disbursement  
4 in a Chapter 7.

5 These do not constitute a materially adverse change to the  
6 treatment of any creditors or interest holders. They merely  
7 update likely distributions based on claims that have now been  
8 settled, and they've otherwise incorporated more recent  
9 financial data. This happens often before confirmation  
10 hearings. The Court finds that it did not mislead or  
11 prejudice any creditors or interest holders, and certainly  
12 there was no need to resolicit the Plan.

13 The only Objectors to the Plan left at this time were Mr.  
14 Dondero and entities that the Court finds are controlled by  
15 him. The standing of these entities to object to the Plan  
16 exists, but the remoteness of their economic interest is  
17 noteworthy, and the Court questions the good faith of the  
18 Objectors. In fact, the Court has good reason to believe that  
19 these parties are not objecting to protect economic interests  
20 they have in the Debtor, but to be disruptors.

21 Mr. Dondero wants his company back. This is  
22 understandable. But it's not a good faith basis to lob  
23 objections to the Plan. The Court has slowed down  
24 confirmation multiple times on the current Plan and urged the  
25 parties to talk to Mr. Dondero. The parties represent that

1 they have, and the Court believes that they have.

2 Now, to be specific about the remoteness of the objectors'  
3 interests, the Court will address them each separately.  
4 First, Mr. Dondero has a pending objection. Mr. Dondero's  
5 only economic interest with regard to the Debtor at this point  
6 is an unliquidated indemnification claim. And based on  
7 everything this Court has heard, his indemnification claim  
8 will be highly questionable at this juncture.

9 Second, a joint objection has been filed by the Dugaboy  
10 Trust and the Get Good Trust. As for the Dugaboy Trust, it  
11 was created to manage the assets of Mr. Dondero and his  
12 family, and it owns a 0.1866 percent limited partnership  
13 interest in the Debtor. The Court is not clear what economic  
14 interest the Get Good Trust has, but it likewise seems to be  
15 related to Mr. Dondero, and it has been represented to the  
16 Court numerous times that the trustee is Mr. Dondero's college  
17 roommate.

18 Another group of Objectors that has joined together in one  
19 objection is what the Court will refer to as the Highland and  
20 NexPoint Advisors and Funds. The Court understands they  
21 assert disputed administrative expense claims against the  
22 estate. While the evidence presented was that they have  
23 independent board members that run these companies, the Court  
24 was not convinced of their independence from Mr. Dondero.  
25 None of the so-called independent board members of these

1 entities have ever testified before the Court. Moreover, they  
2 have all been engaged with the Highland complex for many  
3 years.

4 The witness who testified on these Objectors' behalves at  
5 confirmation, Mr. Jason Post, their chief compliance officer,  
6 resigned from Highland after more than twelve years in October  
7 2020, at the same time that Mr. Dondero resigned or was  
8 terminated by Highland. And a prior witness recently for  
9 these entities whose testimony was made part of the record at  
10 the confirmation hearing essentially testified that Mr.  
11 Dondero controlled these entities.

12 Finally, various NexBank entities objected to the Plan.  
13 The Court does not believe they have liquidated claims. Mr.  
14 Dondero appears to be in control of these entities as well.

15 To be clear, the Court has allowed all of these objectors  
16 to fully present arguments and evidence in opposition to  
17 confirmation, even though their economic interests in the  
18 Debtor appear to be extremely remote and the Court questions  
19 their good faith. Specifically on that latter point, the  
20 Court considers them all to be marching pursuant to the orders  
21 of Mr. Dondero.

22 In the recent past, Mr. Dondero has been subject to a TRO  
23 and preliminary injunction by the Bankruptcy Court for  
24 interfering with the current CEO's management of the Debtor in  
25 specific ways that were supported by evidence. Around the

1 time that this all came to light and the Court began setting  
2 hearings on the alleged interference, Mr. Dondero's company  
3 phone supplied to him by Highland, which he had been asked to  
4 turn in, mysteriously went missing. The Court merely mentions  
5 this in this context as one of many reasons that the Court has  
6 to question the good faith of Mr. Dondero and his affiliated  
7 objectors.

8 The only other pending objection besides these objections  
9 of the Dondero and Dondero-controlled entities is an objection  
10 of the United States Trustee pertaining to the release,  
11 exculpation, and injunction provisions in the Plan.

12 In juxtaposition to these pending objections, the Court  
13 notes that the Debtor has resolved earlier-filed objections to  
14 the Plan filed by the IRS, Patrick Daugherty, CLO Holdco,  
15 Ltd., numerous local taxing authorities, and certain current  
16 and former senior-level employees of the Debtor.

17 With that rather detailed factual background addressed,  
18 because certainly context matters here, the Court now  
19 addresses what it considers the only serious objections raised  
20 in connection with confirmation. Specifically, the Plan  
21 contain certain releases, exculpation, plan injunctions, and a  
22 gatekeeper provision which are obviously not fully consensual,  
23 since there are objections. Certainly, these provisions are  
24 mostly consensual when you consider that parties with hundreds  
25 of millions of dollars' worth of legitimate claims have not

1 objected to them.

2 First, a word about plan releases generally, since the  
3 Objectors at times seem to gloss over, in this Court's view,  
4 relevant distinctions, and seem to refer to the plan releases  
5 in this Plan and the exculpations and the plan injunctions all  
6 as impermissible third-party releases, when, in fact, they are  
7 not, *per se*.

8 It has, without a doubt, become quite commonplace in  
9 complex Chapter 11 bankruptcy cases to have three categories  
10 of releases in plans. These three types are as follows.

11 First, Debtor Releases. A debtor release involves a  
12 release by the debtor and its bankruptcy estate of claims  
13 against nondebtor third-parties. For example, a release may  
14 be granted in favor of creditors, directors, officers,  
15 employees, professionals who participated in the bankruptcy  
16 process. This is the least-controversial type of release  
17 because the debtor is extinguishing its own claims, which are  
18 property of the estate, that a debtor has authority to utilize  
19 or not, pursuant to Sections 541 and 363 of the Bankruptcy  
20 Code.

21 Authority for a debtor release pursuant to a plan arises  
22 out of Section 1123(b) (3) (A), which indicates that a plan may  
23 provide for "the settlement or adjustment of any claim or  
24 interest belonging to the debtor or to the estate."

25 In this context, it would appear that the only analysis

1 required is to determine whether the release or settlement of  
2 the claim is an exercise of reasonable business judgment on  
3 that part of the debtor, is it fair and equitable, is it in  
4 the best interest of the estate, given all the relevant facts  
5 and circumstances? Also relevant is whether there's  
6 consideration given of some sort by the releasees.

7 Now, the second type of very commonplace Chapter 11 plan  
8 release is an exculpation. Chapter 11 plans also very often  
9 have these exculpation provisions, and they're something much  
10 narrower in scope and time than a full-fledged release. An  
11 exculpation provision is more like a shield for a certain  
12 subset of key actors in the case for their acts during and in  
13 connection with the case, which acts may have been merely  
14 negligent.

15 Specifically, a plan may absolve certain actors -- usually  
16 estate fiduciaries -- such as an Official Unsecured Creditors'  
17 Committee and its members, Committee professionals, sometimes  
18 Debtor professionals, senior management, officers and  
19 directors of the Debtor, from any liability for postpetition  
20 negligent conduct -- i.e., conduct which occurred during the  
21 administration of the Chapter 11 case and in the negotiation,  
22 drafting, and implementation of a plan. An exculpation  
23 provision typically excludes gross negligence and willful  
24 misconduct. It is usually worded in a passive voice, so it  
25 may seem a little unclear as to whether it is actually a



1 release and by whom.

2 In any event, the rationale is that parties who actively  
3 participate in a court-approved process -- often, court-  
4 approved transactions by court order -- should receive  
5 protection for their work. Otherwise, who would want to work  
6 in such a messy, contentious situation, only to be sued for  
7 alleged negligence for less-than-perfect end results?

8 Chapter 11 end results are not always pretty. One could  
9 argue that these exculpation provisions, though, are much ado  
10 about nothing. Why? For one thing, again, the shield is only  
11 as to negligent conduct. There is no shield for other  
12 problematic conduct, such as gross negligence or willful  
13 misconduct.

14 Second, in many situations, any claims or causes of action  
15 that might arise will belong to the Debtor or its estate.  
16 Thus, they would already be released pursuant to a debtor  
17 release.

18 Additionally, there is case law stating that, where a  
19 claim is brought against an estate professional whose fees  
20 have already been approved in a final fee application, any  
21 claims are barred by *res judicata*. Thus, exculpated  
22 professionals would only have potential exposure for a very  
23 short window of time, until final fee applications.

24 Additionally, certain case law in Texas makes clear that  
25 an attorney generally does not owe any duties to persons other

1 than his own client.

2 All of this suggests that the shield of a typical  
3 exculpation provision may rarely become useful or needed.

4 Moving now to the third type of release, a true third-  
5 party release, Chapter 11 plans also sometimes contain third-  
6 party releases. A true third-party release involves the  
7 release of claims held by nondebtor third parties against  
8 other nondebtor third parties, and there is often no  
9 limitation on the scope and time of the claims released.

10 This is the most heavily scrutinized of the three types of  
11 plan releases. Much of the case authority focuses on whether  
12 a third-party release is consensual or not in analyzing their  
13 propriety and/or enforceability.

14 In Highland, there are no third-party releases. Rather,  
15 there are debtor releases and exculpations. There also happen  
16 to be plan injunctions and gatekeeper provisions that have  
17 been challenged. The Objectors argue that these provisions  
18 violate the Fifth Circuit's opinion in *Pacific Lumber* or are  
19 otherwise beyond the jurisdiction or authority of the  
20 bankruptcy court. These arguments are now addressed.

21 First, the debtor release is found at Article IX.D of the  
22 Plan. The language, in pertinent part, reads as follows. "On  
23 and after the effective date, each Released Party is deemed to  
24 be hereby conclusively, absolutely, unconditionally,  
25 irrevocably, and forever released and discharged by the Debtor

1 and the Estate, in each case on behalf of themselves and their  
2 respective successors, assigns, and representatives, including  
3 but not limited to the Claimant Trust and the Litigation Sub-  
4 Trust, from any and all causes of action, including any  
5 derivative claims, asserted on behalf of the Debtor, whether  
6 known or unknown, foreseen or unforeseen, matured or  
7 unmatured, existing or hereafter arising, in law, equity,  
8 contract, tort, or otherwise, that the Debtor or the Estate  
9 would have been legally entitled to assert in their own right,  
10 whether individually or collectively, or on behalf of the  
11 holder of any claim against, or interest in, a debtor or other  
12 person."

13       There are certain exceptions discussed, and then Released  
14 Parties are defined at Definition 113 of the Plan collectively  
15 as: the Independent Directors; Strand, solely from the date  
16 of the appointment of the Independent Directors through the  
17 effective date; the CEO/CRO; the Committee, the members of the  
18 Committee, in their official capacities; the professionals  
19 retained by the Debtor and the Committee in the Chapter 11  
20 case; and the employees. This is a defined term in the Plan  
21 Supplement and does not include certain employees.

22       To be clear, these are not third-party releases such as  
23 addressed in the *Pacific Lumber* case. These are the Debtor's  
24 and/or the bankruptcy estate's causes of action that are  
25 proposed to be released. Releases by a debtor are

1 discretionary and can be provided by a debtor to persons who  
2 have provided consideration to the debtor and the estate.  
3 Section 1123(b) (3) (A) of the Bankruptcy Code permits this.

4 The evidence here supported the notion that these releases  
5 are a *quid pro quo* for the Released Parties' significant  
6 contributions to a highly complex and contentious  
7 restructuring. The Debtor is releasing its own claims. Some  
8 of the Released Parties would have indemnification rights  
9 against the Debtor. And the Debtor's CEO, James Seery,  
10 credibly testified that he does not believe any claims exist  
11 as to the Released Parties. The Court approves the Debtor  
12 releases and overrules the objections to them.

13 Next, the exculpations appear at Article IX.C of the Plan  
14 and provide as follows: Subject in all respects to Article  
15 XII.D of the Plan, to the maximum extent permitted by  
16 applicable law, no Exculpated Party will have or incur, and  
17 each Exculpated Party is hereby exculpated from, any claim,  
18 obligation, suit, judgment, damage, demand, debt, right, cause  
19 of action, remedy, loss, and liability for conduct occurring  
20 on or after the petition date in connection with or arising  
21 out of the filing and administration of the Chapter 11 case,  
22 the negotiation and pursuit of a disclosure statement, the  
23 Plan, or the solicitation of votes for or confirmation of the  
24 Plan, the funding or consummation of the Plan, or any related  
25 agreements, instruments, et cetera, et cetera, whether or not

1 such Plan distributions occur following the effective date,  
2 the implementation of the Plan, and any negotiation,  
3 transactions, and documentation in connection with the  
4 foregoing clauses, provided, however, the foregoing will not  
5 apply to any acts or omissions of any Exculpated Party arising  
6 out of or related to acts or omissions that constitute bad  
7 faith, fraud, gross negligence, criminal misconduct, or  
8 willful misconduct; or Strand or any employee other than with  
9 respect to actions taken by such entities from the date of  
10 appointment of the Independent Directors through the effective  
11 date.

12 Exculpated Parties are later defined at Section -- or,  
13 earlier defined at Section 62 of the Plan, Definition No. 62  
14 of the Plan, as later limited by the Debtor, as announced in  
15 the confirmation hearing. And so these are the Exculpated  
16 Parties: the Debtor and its successors and assigns; the  
17 employees, certain employees, as defined; Strand; the  
18 Independent Directors; the Committee, the members of the  
19 Committee, in their official capacities; the professionals  
20 retained by the Debtor and the Committee in the Chapter 11  
21 case; the CEO and CRO; and the related persons as to each of  
22 these parties listed in Part (iv) through (viii) above;  
23 provided, for the avoidance of doubt, and it goes on to say  
24 Dondero, Mark Okada, and various others aren't Exculpated  
25 Parties.

1 Now, as earlier mentioned, the Objectors argue that  
2 *Pacific Lumber*, 584 F.3d 229, a Fifth Circuit case from 2009,  
3 categorically rejects the permissibility of nonconsensual  
4 exculpations as well as third-party releases in a Chapter 11  
5 plan. So the Court is going to take a deep dive into that  
6 assertion.

7 In *Pacific Lumber*, the Fifth Circuit reviewed on appeal  
8 numerous challenges to a confirmed plan of affiliated debtors  
9 known as Palco and Scopac and four subsidiaries. The debtor  
10 Palco owned and operated the sawmill, a power plant, and even  
11 a town called Scotia, California. The debtor Scopac owned  
12 timberlands. A creditor, a secured creditor called Marathon  
13 had a claim against Palco's assets. Marathon estimated  
14 Palco's assets were worth \$110 million. Its claim was \$160  
15 million. Meanwhile, other parties had large secured claims  
16 against the other debtor, Scopac.

17 The plan that the bankruptcy court confirmed, which was on  
18 appeal to the Fifth Circuit, was filed by both the secured  
19 creditor Marathon and a joint plan proponent called MRC. MRC  
20 was a competitor of the debtor Palco. The Marathon/MRC plan  
21 proposed to dissolve all the debtors, cancel intercompany  
22 debts, and create two new entities, Townco and Newco. Almost  
23 all of the debtor Palco's assets, including the town of  
24 Scotia, California, would be transferred to Townco. The  
25 timberlands and other assets, including the sawmill, would be

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1 placed in Newco.

2 Marathon and MRC proposed to contribute \$580 million to  
3 Newco to pay claims against Scopac. And Marathon would  
4 convert its secured claim against Palco's assets into equity,  
5 giving it full ownership of Townco, a 15 percent stake in  
6 Newco, and a new note for the sawmill's working capital. MRC  
7 would own the other 80 percent of Newco and would manage and  
8 run the company.

9 An indenture trustee for the secured indebtedness against  
10 Scopac -- which, by the way, had also been a plan proponent of  
11 a competing plan -- appealed the confirmation order, raising  
12 eight distinct issues on appeal. One of the eight issues  
13 pertained to what the Fifth Circuit referred to as a  
14 "nondebtor exculpation and release clause." This issue is  
15 discussed on the last two pages of a very lengthy opinion.

16 While the complained-of provision is not quoted verbatim  
17 in the *Pacific Lumber* opinion, it appears to have been a  
18 typical exculpation clause. Not a third-party release; a  
19 typical exculpation clause. The Fifth Circuit stated, "The  
20 plan releases MRC, Marathon, Newco, Townco, and the Unsecured  
21 Creditors' Committee, and their personnel, from liability,  
22 other than for willful and gross negligence related to  
23 proposing, implementing, and administering the plan" at Page  
24 251.

25 The Fifth Circuit held that "the nondebtor releases must

1 be struck except with respect to the Creditors' Committee and  
2 its members."

3 Footnote 26 of the opinion also states that the appellants  
4 had "not briefed why Newco and Townco or their officers and  
5 directors should not be released," and so "we do not analyze  
6 their position." Rather, the Fifth Circuit merely analyzed  
7 why the exculpation provision was not permissible as to the  
8 two plan proponents, MRC and Marathon.

9 Thus, the Court views *Pacific Lumber* as being a holding  
10 that squarely addressed the propriety of two plan proponents,  
11 a secured lender and a third-party competitor purchaser of the  
12 Debtors, obtaining nonconsensual exculpation in the plan.  
13 However, its reasoning certainly cannot be ignored, strongly  
14 suggesting it would not be inclined to approve an exculpation  
15 for any party other than a Creditors' Committee or its  
16 members.

17 As far as the Fifth Circuit's reasoning, it relied on  
18 Bankruptcy Code Section 524(e) for striking down the  
19 exculpations, stating, "The law states, however, that  
20 discharge of a debt of the debtor does not affect the  
21 liability of any other entity on such debt." Page 251. The  
22 opinion suggests that MRC and Marathon may have tried to argue  
23 that 524(e) did not apply to their exculpations because MRC  
24 and Marathon were not liable as co-obligors in any way on any  
25 of the debtor's debt.



1       The Fifth Circuit seemed dismissive of this argument,  
2       stating as follows, "MRC/Marathon insist the release clause is  
3       part of their bargain because, without the clause, neither  
4       company would have been willing to provide the plan's  
5       financing. Nothing in the records suggests that MRC/Marathon,  
6       the Committee, or the Debtor's officers and directors were co-  
7       liable for the Debtor's prepetition debts. Instead, the  
8       bargain the proponents claim to have purchased is exculpation  
9       from any negligence that occurred during the course of the  
10      case. Any costs the released parties might incur defending  
11      against suits alleging such negligence are unlikely to swamp  
12      either of these parties or the consummated reorganization. We  
13      see little equitable about protecting the released nondebtors  
14      from negligence suits arising out of the reorganization."

15      The Court goes on to note that, in a variety of cases,  
16      that releases have been approved, but these cases "seem  
17      broadly to foreclose nonconsensual nondebtor releases and  
18      permanent injunctions."

19      The Court then adds at Footnote 27 that the Fifth Circuit  
20      in the past did not set aside challenged plan releases that  
21      were in final nonappealable orders and were the subject of  
22      collateral attack much later, citing its famous *Republic*  
23      *Supply v. Shoaf* case, where the Fifth Circuit ruled that *res*  
24      *judicata* barred a debtor from bringing a claim that was  
25      specifically and expressly released by a confirmed

1 reorganization plan because the debtor -- the objector failed  
2 to object to the release at confirmation.

3 The Fifth Circuit in *Pacific Lumber* also noted that the  
4 Bankruptcy Code permits bankruptcy courts to enjoin third-  
5 party asbestos claims under certain circumstances, 524(g),  
6 which the Court said suggests nondebtor releases are most  
7 appropriate as a method to channel mass tort claims towards a  
8 specific pool of assets, citing numerous cases, including  
9 *Johns-Manville*.

10 In reach its holding, the Fifth Circuit saw no reason to  
11 uphold exculpation to the plan proponents MRC and Marathon,  
12 seeming to find it inconsistent with 524(e) under the facts at  
13 bar, but the Court did uphold exculpation for the Creditors'  
14 Committee and its members, stating, "We agree, however, with  
15 courts that have held that 1103(c) under the Code, which lists  
16 the Creditors' Committee's powers, implies Committee members  
17 have qualified immunity for actions within the scope of their  
18 duties." Numerous cites. "The Creditors' Committee and its  
19 members are the only disinterested volunteers among the  
20 parties sought to be released here. The scope of protection,  
21 which does not insulate them from willful and gross  
22 negligence, is adequate."

23 Thus, the Court held that the exculpation provisions in  
24 *Pacific Lumber* must be struck except with regard to the  
25 Creditors' Committee and its members.

1 Now, after all of that, this Court believes the following  
2 can be gleaned from *Pacific Lumber*. First, the Fifth Circuit  
3 hinted that consensual exculpations and/or consensual  
4 nondebtor third-party releases are permissible. The Court  
5 was, of course, dealing with nonconsensual exculpations in  
6 *Pacific Lumber*. In this regard, I note Page 252, where the  
7 Court cited various prior Fifth Circuit authority and then  
8 stated, "These cases seem broadly to foreclose nonconsensual  
9 nondebtor releases and permanent injunctions."

10 The second thing that can be gleaned from *Pacific Lumber*:  
11 The Fifth Circuit hinted that nondebtor releases may be  
12 permissible in cases involving global settlements of mass  
13 claims against the debtors and co-liable parties. The Court,  
14 of course, referred to 524(g), but various other cases which  
15 approved nondebtor releases where mass claims were channeled  
16 to a specific pool of assets.

17 Third, the Fifth Circuit outright held that exculpations  
18 from negligence for a Creditors' Committee and its members are  
19 permissible because the concept is both consistent with  
20 1103(c), "which implies Committee members have qualified  
21 immunity for actions within the scope of their duties," and a  
22 good policy result, since "if members of the Committee can be  
23 sued by persons unhappy with the outcome of the case, it will  
24 be extremely difficult to find members to serve on an official  
25 committee."

1 Fourth, the Fifth Circuit recognized in *Pacific Lumber*  
2 that *res judicata* may bar complaints regarding an  
3 impermissible plan release, citing to its earlier *Republic*  
4 *Supply v. Shoaf* opinion.

5 Now, being ever-mindful of the Fifth Circuit's words in  
6 *Pacific Lumber*, this Court cannot help but wonder about at  
7 least three things.

8 First, did the Fifth Circuit leave open the door that  
9 facts/equities might sometimes justify approval of an  
10 exculpation for a person other than a Creditors' Committee and  
11 its members? For example, the Fifth Circuit stated, in  
12 referring to the plan proponents Marathon and MRC, that "Any  
13 costs the released parties might incur defending against suits  
14 alleging such negligence are unlikely to swamp either of these  
15 parties or the consummated reorganization." Here, this Court  
16 can easily expect the proposed exculpated parties to incur  
17 costs that could swamp them and the reorganization based on  
18 the past litigious conduct of Mr. Dondero and his controlled  
19 entities. Do these words of the Fifth Circuit hint that  
20 equities/economics might sometimes justify an exculpation?

21 Second, did the Fifth Circuit's rationale for permitted  
22 exculpations to Creditors' Committee and their members, which  
23 was clearly policy-based, based on their implied qualified  
24 immunity flowing from their duties in Section 1103 and their  
25 disinterestedness, and the importance of their role in a

1 Chapter 11 case, did this rationale leave open the door to  
2 sometimes permitting exculpations to other parties in a  
3 particular Chapter 11 case besides Creditors' Committees and  
4 their members? For example, in a situation such as the  
5 Highland case, in which Independent Directors, brought in to  
6 avoid a trustee, are more like a Creditors' Committee than an  
7 incumbent board of directors.

8 Third, the Fifth Circuit's sole statutory basis was  
9 Section 524(e). This Court would humbly submit that this is a  
10 statute dealing with prepetition liability in which some  
11 nondebtor is liable with the Debtor. Exculpation is a concept  
12 dealing with postpetition liability.

13 The Ninth Circuit recently, in a case called *Blixseth v.*  
14 *Credit Suisse*, 961 F.3d 1074 (9th Cir. 2020), approved the  
15 validity of an exculpation clause incorporated into a  
16 confirmed Chapter 11 plan that purported to absolve certain  
17 nondebtor parties that were "closely involved" in drafting the  
18 plan. They were the largest secured creditor, a purchaser,  
19 and an individual who was an indirect owner of certain of the  
20 debtor companies. The exculpation was from any negligence,  
21 liability, for "any act or omission in connection with,  
22 related to, or arising out of the Chapter 11 cases."

23 By the time the appeal was before the Ninth Circuit, the  
24 only issue was the propriety of the exculpation clause as to  
25 the large secured creditor, which was also a plan proponent,

1 since all the other exculpated parties had settled with the  
2 appellant.

3 The Court, in determining that the exculpation clause was  
4 permissible as to the secured lender, concluded that Section  
5 524(e) "does not bar a narrow exculpation clause of the kind  
6 here at issue -- that is, one focused on actions of various  
7 participants in the plan approval process and relating only to  
8 that process," Page 1082. Why? Because "Section 524(e)  
9 establishes that discharge of a debt of the debtor does not  
10 affect the liability of any other entity on such debt." In  
11 other words, the discharge in no way affects the liability of  
12 any other entity for the discharged debt. By its terms,  
13 524(e) prevents a bankruptcy court from extinguishing claims  
14 of creditors against nondebtors over the very discharged debt  
15 through the bankruptcy proceedings.

16 The Court went on to explicitly disagree with *Pacific*  
17 *Lumber* in its analysis of 524(e), reiterating that an  
18 exculpation clause covers only liabilities arising from the  
19 bankruptcy proceedings and not of any of the debtor's  
20 discharged debt. Footnote 7, Page 1085.

21 Ultimately, the Court held that under Section 105(a),  
22 which empowers a bankruptcy court to issue any order, process,  
23 or judgment that is necessary or appropriate to carry out the  
24 provisions of Chapter 11 and Section 1123, which establishes  
25 the appropriate content of the bankruptcy plan, under these

1 sections, the bankruptcy court had authority to approve an  
2 exculpation clause intended to trim subsequent litigation over  
3 acts taken during the bankruptcy proceedings and so render the  
4 plan viable.

5 This Court concludes that, just as the Fifth Circuit left  
6 open the door for consensual exculpations and releases in  
7 *Pacific Lumber*, just as it left open the door for consensual  
8 exculpations and releases in *Pacific Lumber*, its dicta  
9 suggests that an exculpation might be permissible if there is  
10 a showing that "costs that the released parties might incur  
11 defending against suits alleging such negligence are likely to  
12 swamp either the Exculpated Parties or the reorganization."  
13 Again, that was a quote from the Fifth Circuit.

14 If ever there were a risk of that happening in a Chapter  
15 11 reorganization, it is this one. The Debtor's current CEO  
16 credibly testified that Mr. Dondero has said outside the  
17 courtroom that if Mr. Dondero's own pot plan does not get  
18 approved, that he will "burn the place down." Here, this  
19 Court can easily expect the proposed exculpated parties might  
20 expect to incur costs that could swamp them and the  
21 reorganization process based on the past litigious conduct of  
22 Mr. Dondero and his controlled entities.

23 Additionally, this Court concludes that the Fifth  
24 Circuit's rationale in *Pacific Lumber* for permitted  
25 exculpations to Creditors' Committees and their members, which

1 was clearly policy-based based on their implied qualified  
2 immunity flowing from Section 1103 and their importance in a  
3 Chapter 11 case, leaves the door open to sometimes permitting  
4 exculpations to other parties in a particular Chapter 11 case  
5 besides a UCC and its members.

6 Again, if there was ever such a case, the Court believes  
7 it is this one, in which Independent Directors were brought in  
8 to avoid a trustee and are much more like a Creditors'  
9 Committee than an incumbent board of directors. While,  
10 admittedly, there are a few exculpated parties here proposed  
11 beyond the independent board, such as certain employees, it  
12 would appear that no one is invulnerable to a lawsuit here if  
13 past is prologue in this Highland saga.

14 The Creditors' Committee was initially not keen on  
15 exculpations for certain employees. However, Mr. Seery  
16 credibly testified that there was a contentious arm's-length  
17 negotiation over this and that he needs these employees to  
18 preserve value implementing the Plan. Mr. Dondero has shown  
19 no hesitancy to litigate with former employees in the past, to  
20 the *nth* degree, and there is every reason to believe he would  
21 again in the future, if able.

22 Finally, in this situation, in the case at bar, we would  
23 appear to have a *Shoaf* reason to approve the exculpations.  
24 The January 9, 2020 order of this Court, Docket Entry 339,  
25 which approved the independent board and an ongoing corporate



1 governance structure for this case, and which is incorporated  
2 into the Plan at Article IX.H, provided as follows: "No  
3 entity may commence or pursue a claim or cause of action of  
4 any kind against any Independent Director, any Independent  
5 Director's agents, or any Independent Director's advisors  
6 relating in any way to the Independent Director's role as an  
7 Independent Director of Strand without the Court (1) first  
8 determining, after notice, that such claim or cause of action  
9 represents a colorable claim of willful misconduct or gross  
10 negligence against Independent Director, any Independent  
11 Director's agents, or any Independent Director's advisors; and  
12 (2) specifically authorizing such entity to bring such a  
13 claim. The Court will have sole jurisdiction to adjudicate  
14 any claim for which approval of the Court to commence or  
15 pursue has been granted."

16 This was both an exculpation from negligence as to the  
17 Independent Directors and their agents and advisors, as well  
18 as a gatekeeping provision. This Court believes that this  
19 provision basically approved an exculpation for the  
20 Independent Directors way back on January 9, 2020 for their  
21 postpetition conduct that might be negligent. And this is the  
22 law of the case and has *res judicata* preclusive effect now.

23 Thus, as to the three Independent Directors, as well as  
24 the other named parties in the January 9, 2020 order, their  
25 agents, their advisors, we have a situation that fits within

1 *Republic Supply v. Shoaf*, and we fit within the exception  
2 articulated in *Pacific Lumber*.

3 The Court reserves the right to supplement these findings  
4 and conclusions as to the exculpations, but based on the  
5 foregoing, they are approved and the objections are overruled.

6 Now, turning to the Plan objection, it appears at Article  
7 IX.F of the Plan and provides, in pertinent part, as follows:  
8 Upon entry of the confirmation order, all enjoined parties are  
9 and shall be permanently enjoined on and after the effective  
10 date from taking any action to interfere with the  
11 implementation or consummation of the Plan. Except as  
12 expressly provided in the Plan, the confirmation order, or a  
13 separate order of the Bankruptcy Court, all Enjoined Parties  
14 are and shall be permanently enjoined on and after the  
15 effective date, with respect to any claims and interests, from  
16 directly or indirectly -- and then commencing, conducting,  
17 continuing any suit, action, proceeding of any kind, and  
18 numerous other acts of that vein.

19 The injunction set forth herein shall extend to and apply  
20 to any act of the type set forth in any of the causes above  
21 against any successors to the Debtor, including but not  
22 limited to the Reorganized Debtor, the Litigation Sub-Trust,  
23 and the Claimant Trust, and their respective property and  
24 interests in property.

25 Plan injunctions like this are commonplace and

1 appropriate. They are entirely consistent with and  
2 permissible under Bankruptcy Code Sections 1123(a)(5),  
3 1123(a)(6), 1141(a) and (c), and 1142, as well as Bankruptcy  
4 Rule 3016(c), which articulates the form that a plan  
5 injunction must be set forth in a plan.

6 The Court finds the objections to the Plan Injunctions to  
7 be unfounded, and they are thus overruled without much  
8 discussion here.

9 Now, lastly, the Gatekeeper Provision. It appears at  
10 Paragraph 4 of Article IX.F of the Plan and provides, in  
11 pertinent part, "Subject in all respects to Article XII.D, no  
12 Enjoined Party may commence or pursue a claim or cause of  
13 action of any kind against any Protected Party that arose or  
14 arises from or is related to the Chapter 11 case, the  
15 negotiation of the Plan, the administration of the Plan, or  
16 property to be distributed under the Plan, the wind-down of  
17 the business of the Debtor or Reorganized Debtor, the  
18 administration of the Claimant Trust or the Litigation Sub-  
19 Trust, or the transactions in furtherance of the foregoing,  
20 without the Bankruptcy Court (1) first determining, after  
21 notice and a hearing, that such claim or cause of action  
22 represents a colorable claim of any kind, including but not  
23 limited to negligence, bad faith, criminal misconduct and  
24 willful misconduct, fraud, or gross negligence against a  
25 Protected Party; and (2) specifically authorizing such

1 Enjoined Party to bring such claim or cause of action against  
2 such Protected Party, provided, however, that the foregoing  
3 will not apply to a claim or cause of action against Strand or  
4 against any employee other than with respect to actions taken,  
5 respectively, by Strand or any such employee from the date of  
6 appointment of the Independent Directors through the effective  
7 date. The Bankruptcy Court will have sole and exclusive  
8 jurisdiction to determine whether a claim or cause of action  
9 is colorable and, only to the extent legally permissible and  
10 as provided for in Article XI, shall have jurisdiction to  
11 adjudicate the underlying colorable claim or cause of action."

12 This gatekeeper provision appears necessary and reasonable  
13 in light of the litigiousness of Mr. Dondero and his  
14 controlled entities that has been described at length herein.  
15 Provisions similar to this have been approved in this district  
16 in the *Pilgrim's Pride* case and the *CHC Helicopter* case. The  
17 provision is within the spirit of the Supreme Court's Barton  
18 Doctrine. And it appears consistent with the notion of a pre-  
19 filing injunction to deter vexatious litigants that has been  
20 approved by the Fifth Circuit in such cases as *Baum v. Blue*  
21 *Moon Ventures*, 513 F.3d 181, and in the *In re Carroll* case,  
22 850 F.3d 811, which arose out of a bankruptcy pre-filing  
23 injunction.

24 The Fifth Circuit, in fact, noted in the *Carroll* case that  
25 federal courts have authority to enjoin vexatious litigants

1 under the All Writs Act, 28 U.S.C. § 1651. And additionally,  
2 under the Bankruptcy Code, a bankruptcy court can issue any  
3 order, including a civil contempt order, necessary or  
4 appropriate to carry out the provisions of the Code, citing,  
5 of course, 105 of the Bankruptcy Code.

6 The Fifth Circuit stated that, when considering whether to  
7 enjoin future filings against a vexatious litigant, a  
8 bankruptcy court must consider the circumstances of the case,  
9 including four factors: (1) the party's history of  
10 litigation; in particular, whether he has filed vexatious,  
11 harassing, or duplicative lawsuits; (2) whether the party had  
12 a good faith basis for pursuing the litigation, or perhaps  
13 intended to harass; (3) the extent of the burden on the courts  
14 and other parties resulting from the party's filings; and (4)  
15 the adequacy of alternatives.

16 In the *Baum* case, the Fifth Circuit stated that the  
17 traditional standards for injunctive relief -- i.e.,  
18 irreparable harm and inadequate remedy at law -- do not apply  
19 to the issuance of an injunction against a vexatious litigant.

20 Here, although I have not been asked to declare Mr.  
21 Dondero and his affiliated entities as vexatious litigants *per*  
22 *se*, it is certainly not beyond the pale to find that his long  
23 history with regard to the major creditors in this case has  
24 strayed into that possible realm, and thus this Court is  
25 justified in approving this provision.

1 One of the Objectors' lawyers stated very eloquently in  
2 closing argument, in opposing the plan injunction and  
3 gatekeeping provisions, that "Even a serial killer has  
4 constitutional rights," suggesting that these provisions would  
5 deprive Mr. Dondero and his controlled entities of fundamental  
6 rights or due process somehow. But to paraphrase the district  
7 court in the *Carroll* case, no one, rich or poor, is entitled  
8 to abuse the judicial process. There exists no constitutional  
9 right of access to the courts to prosecute actions that are  
10 frivolous or malicious. The Plan injunction and gatekeeper  
11 provisions in Highland's plan simply set forth a way for this  
12 Court to use its tools, its inherent powers, to avoid abuse of  
13 the court system, protect the implementation of the Plan, and  
14 preempt the use of judicial time that properly could be used  
15 to consider the meritorious claims of other litigants.

16 Accordingly, the Objectors' objections to this provision  
17 are overruled.

18 As earlier stated, this Court reserves the right to alter  
19 or supplement this ruling in a written order. In this regard,  
20 the Court directs Debtor's counsel -- I hope you are still  
21 awake; it's been a long time -- the Court directs Debtor's  
22 counsel to submit a form of order. And specifically, I assume  
23 that you've already prepared or have been in the process of  
24 preparing a set of findings of fact, conclusions of law, and  
25 confirmation order that tracks the confirmation evidence and

1 recites conclusions of law that the Plan complies with all the  
2 various provisions of Section 1123, 1129, and other applicable  
3 Code provisions.

4 What I want you to do is take this bench ruling and add it  
5 to what you've prepared. And what I mean is, as you can tell,  
6 I've been reading: I will have my courtroom deputy email to  
7 you all a copy of what I just read. I'll have her obviously  
8 copy the Debtor's counsel, Creditors' Committee, Dondero and  
9 the other Objectors, copy them on this written document she's  
10 going to send out. And, again, I want you to kind of meld it  
11 into what you've already been preparing.

12 Obviously, I did not address in this oral ruling every  
13 provision of 1129(a) and (b). I did not address every 1123  
14 objection. I did not even address every single objection of  
15 the Objectors. But, again, any objection I've not  
16 specifically addressed today is overruled.

17 The briefing, I should say, that the Debtor submitted,  
18 there was a Memorandum of Law in Support of Confirmation filed  
19 on January 22nd. There was also a reply brief, a hundred  
20 pages or so, separately filed, replying to all the objections.  
21 I don't disagree with anything that was in that. So, again,  
22 to the extent you want to send me conclusions of law that are  
23 along the lines of that briefing, I would consider that.

24 And so what I thought is you'll send me the melded  
25 document and I will edit it if I see fit. I recognize this

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1 may take a few days, so I don't give you a strict timetable,  
2 just hopefully it won't take too many days.

3 All right. Is there anyone out there -- Mr. Pomerantz,  
4 you had to go to jury duty, except I can't believe --

5 MR. POMERANTZ: No, I --

6 THE COURT: I can't believe you were called, but are  
7 you there?

8 MR. POMERANTZ: Your Honor, I am here. I was luckily  
9 excused, because I probably wouldn't have made it.

10 Your Honor, one just comment I'd make. You referred to  
11 the January 9th order. You didn't refer to the CEO order,  
12 which is your order July 16th, which had the same gatekeeper  
13 provision. I assume that was the same analysis?

14 THE COURT: That was an oversight. Same analysis.  
15 And that's exactly why I said I reserve the right to  
16 supplement or amend, because I know there had to be places  
17 like that where I omitted to mention something important.

18 MR. POMERANTZ: But thank you, Your Honor, for your  
19 thoughtful ruling, and we will certainly incorporate your  
20 materials into the order that we're working on and get it to  
21 you when we can. But we appreciate it on behalf of the  
22 Debtor. We know this took a lot of time and a lot of effort.  
23 Hopefully, you got a chance to still watch the Super Bowl  
24 yesterday.

25 THE COURT: Well, when I saw that Tom Brady was going



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1 to win, I turned it off.

2 I'm sorry. That's terrible. You know, my law clerk, my  
3 law clerk that you can't see, Nate, he is from Ann Arbor,  
4 Michigan, University of Michigan, and he almost cried when I  
5 said I didn't like Tom Brady the other day. So, I apologize.

6 MR. POMERANTZ: Your Honor, one other comment. We  
7 had our motion to assume our nonresidential real property  
8 lease that was also on. It got missed in all the fanfare, but  
9 it was -- it has been unopposed and essentially done pursuant  
10 to stipulation. So we'd like to submit an order on that as  
11 well.

12 THE COURT: Okay. I have seen that, and I approve it  
13 under 365. You may submit the order. Okay. Thank you.

14 MR. POMERANTZ: Thank you, Your Honor.

15 THE CLERK: All rise.

16 (Proceedings concluded at 10:35 a.m.)

17 --oOo--

18

19

20 CERTIFICATE

21 I certify that the foregoing is a correct transcript from  
22 the electronic sound recording of the proceedings in the  
above-entitled matter.

23 **/s/ Kathy Rehling**

**02/09/2021**

24

25 \_\_\_\_\_  
Kathy Rehling, CETD-444  
Certified Electronic Court Transcriber

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

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# EXHIBIT C

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ATTORNEYS FOR HIGHLAND CAPITAL  
MANAGEMENT FUND ADVISORS, L.P. AND  
NEXPOINT ADVISORS, L.P.

**IN THE UNITED STATES BANKRUPTCY COURT  
FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS  
DALLAS DIVISION**

	)	
In re:	)	Chapter 11
	)	
HIGHLAND CAPITAL MANAGEMENT, L.P.	)	Case No. 19-34054 (SGJ11)
	)	
Debtor.	)	
	)	
	)	

**NOTICE OF APPEAL**

COME NOW Highland Capital Management Fund Advisors, L.P. and NexPoint Advisors, L.P. (the “Appellants”), creditors and parties-in-interest in the above styled and numbered bankruptcy case (the “Bankruptcy Case”) of Highland Capital Management, L.P. (the “Debtor”), and, pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 158(a), hereby appeal to the United States District Court for the Northern District of Texas that certain *Order (i) Confirming the Fifth Amended Plan of Reorganization of Highland Capital Management, L.P. (as Modified) and (ii) Granting Related Relief* (the “Confirmation Order”) entered by the Bankruptcy Court on February 22, 2021 at docket no. 1943 in the Bankruptcy Case.

A copy of the Confirmation is attached hereto as Exhibit “A.”

The names of the parties to the Confirmation Order, and the contact information for their attorneys, is as follows:

1. Appellants:

Highland Capital Management Fund Advisors, L.P.  
NexPoint Advisors, L.P.

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2. Appellee:

Highland Capital Management, L.P.

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RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED this 1<sup>st</sup> day of March, 2021.

**MUNSCH HARDT KOPF & HARR, P.C.**

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**ATTORNEYS FOR HIGHLAND CAPITAL  
MANAGEMENT FUND ADVISORS, L.P. AND  
NEXPOINT ADVISORS, L.P.**

## CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

The undersigned hereby certifies that, on this the 1st day of March, 2021, true and correct copies of this document were electronically served by the Court's ECF system on parties entitled to notice thereof, including on counsel for the Appellee.

By: /s/ Davor Rukavina  
Davor Rukavina, Esq.

Case: 21-90011 Document: 00515803515 Page: 241 Date Filed: 03/31/2021

# EXHIBIT D

**IN THE UNITED STATES BANKRUPTCY COURT  
FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS  
DALLAS DIVISION**

Case No. 19-34054 (SGJ11)

000731





- (i) not permitted by the Bankruptcy Code and effectively effectuates prohibited third party releases for the same reasons as stated above with respect to exculpation;
- (ii) not permitted with respect to any post-confirmation matter as the Bankruptcy Court will have no jurisdiction over such matters to make any finding or render any order, which would be purely advisory; and
- (iii) not permitted because it violates due process by requiring a party with a claim to seek leave from a court that has no jurisdiction and, if such leave is not granted, such claim will be permanently enjoined without having a court of competent jurisdiction pass on its merits.

6. Whether the Bankruptcy Court erred as a matter of law in confirming the Plan and entering the Confirmation Order because the Debtor failed to satisfy the 11 U.S.C. § 1129(a)(2) element for confirmation requiring the Debtor to have complied with all applicable provisions of the Bankruptcy Code, which the Debtor admittedly failed to do because it utterly failed to comply with Bankruptcy Rule 2015.3?

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED this 11th day of March, 2021.

**MUNSCH HARDT KOPF & HARR, P.C.**

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**ATTORNEYS FOR HIGHLAND CAPITAL  
MANAGEMENT FUND ADVISORS, L.P. AND  
NEXPOINT ADVISORS, L.P.**

## CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

The undersigned hereby certifies that, on this the 11th day of March, 2021, true and correct copies of this document were electronically served by the Court's ECF system on parties entitled to notice thereof, including on counsel for the Appellee.

By: /s/ Davor Rukavina  
Davor Rukavina, Esq.

Case: 21-90011 Document: 00515803515 Page: 246 Date Filed: 03/31/2021

# EXHIBIT E



CLERK, U.S. BANKRUPTCY COURT  
NORTHERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS

**ENTERED**

THE DATE OF ENTRY IS ON  
THE COURT'S DOCKET

The following constitutes the ruling of the court and has the force and effect therein described.

Signed March 16, 2021

  
United States Bankruptcy Judge

IN THE UNITED STATES BANKRUPTCY COURT  
FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS  
DALLAS DIVISION

In re:

HIGHLAND CAPITAL MANAGEMENT, L.P.

Debtor.

Chapter 11

Case No. 19-34054 (SGJ11)

**ORDER CERTIFYING APPEALS OF THE CONFIRMATION ORDER  
FOR DIRECT APPEAL TO THE UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS  
FOR THE FIFTH CIRCUIT**

CAME ON FOR CONSIDERATION the *Joint Motion for Certification of Appeals of Confirmation Order for Direct Appeal to the Fifth Circuit* (the "Motion"), filed jointly by Highland Capital Management, L.P., Highland Capital Management Fund Advisors, L.P., NexPoint Advisors, L.P., Highland Global Allocation Fund, Highland Income Fund, NexPoint Capital, Inc., NexPoint Strategic Opportunities Fund, James Dondero, Get Good Trust, and The Dugaboy Investment Trust (collectively, the "Parties").

EXHIBIT E



## EXHIBIT 19

No. \_\_\_\_\_

IN THE  
**United States Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit**

---

In Re: HIGHLAND CAPITAL MANAGEMENT, L.P.

Proposed Appeal of Highland Income Fund, NexPoint Strategic Opportunities  
Fund, Highland Global Allocation Fund and NexPoint Capital, Inc.

---

*On petition for direct appeal from the United States Bankruptcy Court  
for the Northern District of Texas at No. 19-34054; Appeal pending in the United States  
District Court for the Northern District of Texas at No. 3:21-cv-00539-N*

---

**PETITION FOR DIRECT APPEAL UNDER 28 U.S.C. § 158(d)**

---

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## **CERTIFICATE OF INTERESTED PERSONS**

### **Appellants**

Highland Income Fund; NexPoint Strategic Opportunities Fund; Highland Global Allocation Fund and NexPoint Capital, Inc.

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### **Other Appellants:**

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#### *Counsel:*

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Highland Capital Management Fund Advisors, L.P.

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## INTRODUCTION

Section 158(d)(2) allows a direct appeal from a bankruptcy court to the court of appeals if at least one of four conditions is met. *See* 28 U.S.C. § 158(d). The bankruptcy court order at issue here, which confirmed a complex plan and included a number of contested provisions, independently meets three of Section 158(d)(2)’s provisions.

*First*, as the Bankruptcy Court held when it certified its confirmation order for direct appeal, a direct appeal “may materially advance the progress of the case” because (1) the interests at stake guarantee that the case will ultimately be appealed to this Court, (2) the parties have significant interests in obtaining this Court’s prompt review so that they can order their affairs accordingly in light of certain future actions Highland Capital Management, L.P. (the “Debtor”), proposes to take and (3) the parties will collectively spend hundreds of thousands of dollars in district-court proceedings that will almost certainly be unnecessary in light of this Court’s ultimate review. *See* 28 U.S.C. § 158(d)(2)(A)(iii).

*Second*, the confirmed plan includes broad exculpation and injunction provisions the Funds believe *Bank of N.Y. Trust Co., N.A. v. Official Unsecured Creditors’ Comm. (In re Pacific Lumber Co.)*, 584 F.3d 229 (5th Cir. 2009), plainly

prohibits.<sup>1</sup> A number of district courts and bankruptcy courts in this Circuit read *Pacific Lumber* as the Funds do, but the Bankruptcy Court read the case more narrowly. Accordingly, there is a conflict among the “lower” courts on a question of law that requires this Court’s resolution. *See* 28 U.S.C. § 158(d)(2)(A)(ii).

*Third*, the Bankruptcy Court held that the protections the Bankruptcy Code affords to creditors’ committees and their members may be extended to “other parties in a particular chapter 11 case that perform similar roles to a creditors’ committee and its members.” Neither this Court nor the Supreme Court has addressed or approved such a protection-by-analogy holding, and, so, there is no controlling authority on that legal question. *See* 28 U.S.C. § 158(d)(2)(A)(i).

The Confirmation Order meets the requirements of Section 158(d)(2) in three independent ways, and the Funds request that the Court allow a direct appeal.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The Funds, who are the petitioners, include Highland Income Fund, NexPoint Strategic Opportunities Fund, Highland Global Allocation Fund and NexPoint Capital, Inc.

<sup>2</sup> As other aggrieved parties have noted in their separate petition for permission, there are issues for review beyond the exculpation and injunction issues. Because of space constraints, the Funds focus here on those issues that most plainly demonstrate that the confirmation order should be directly appealed; the Funds reserve the right to raise additional issues should the Court accept the direct appeal.

## FACTUAL AND PROCEDURAL HISTORY

The Bankruptcy Court fairly noted that this is not a garden-variety bankruptcy case. However, while the facts and procedural history are complex, the Funds believe the Court needs only a summary to understand this petition.

James Dondero co-founded Highland Capital Management L.P. (the “Debtor”) in 1993.<sup>3</sup> The Debtor provided services to and support for an extensive network of investment entities, trusts, other ventures and investment advisers.<sup>4</sup> The Debtor invested and managed billions of dollars on behalf of itself, its subsidiaries and affiliates and other unaffiliated entities.<sup>5</sup> The Debtor provided such services to collateralized loan obligation vehicles (“CLOs”).<sup>6</sup> The CLOs own assets, generally securities at this stage, and the Debtor manages them pursuant to a series of portfolio-management agreements between itself and the CLOs.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Order (I) Confirming the Fifth Amended Plan of Reorganization of Highland Capital Management, L.P. (as Modified) and (II) Granting Related Relief (the “Confirmation Order”) at ¶ 4 (attached at Tab “A”).

<sup>4</sup> Confirmation Order at ¶ 6.

<sup>5</sup> *Id.*

<sup>6</sup> *Id.*

<sup>7</sup> Debtor’s Fifth Amended Plan of Reorganization of Highland Capital Management, L.P. (as Modified) (the “Plan”) at Exh. B (attached at Tab “B”).

The Debtor filed for Chapter-11 bankruptcy protection in Delaware in October 2019.<sup>8</sup>

The Debtor and the Official Unsecured Creditors' Committee (the "Committee") had a difficult relationship from the start.<sup>9</sup> First, the Committee moved for a change of venue to the Northern District of Texas (which was granted).<sup>10</sup> Second, the Committee and, ultimately, the bankruptcy trustee pushed for appointment of a Chapter-11 trustee.<sup>11</sup>

On January 9, 2020, the Debtor, the Committee and Mr. Dondero entered into a stipulation and consent order (the "January 9 Order").<sup>12</sup> The January 9 Order provided, among other things, for the removal of Mr. Dondero from the management of the Debtor, replaced him with a board of independent directors (the "Independent Directors") and prohibited Mr. Dondero from causing "Related Entities" to terminate contracts with the Debtor.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> *Id.* at ¶ 4.

<sup>9</sup> *Id.* at ¶ 11.

<sup>10</sup> *Id.*

<sup>11</sup> *Id.*

<sup>12</sup> *Id.* at ¶ 12.

<sup>13</sup> *Id.* The Independent Directors include James P. Seery, Jr.; John S. Dubel and retired bankruptcy judge Russell Nelms. *Id.*



Among other things, Mr. Dondero beneficially owns two investment advisers, Highland Capital Management Fund Advisors, L.P., and NexPoint Advisors, L.P. (the “Advisors”), because he owns their general partners.<sup>14</sup>

Petitioners are several retail investment funds (the “Funds”). The Funds invest more than \$1 billion for the benefit of thousands of investors/shareholders. In doing so, the Funds receive advice and services from the Advisors. The Advisors and the Funds are subject to the regulatory regime established pursuant to the Investment Company Act of 1940 and the Investment Advisers Act of 1940. Among other investments, the Funds hold interests in a number of the CLOs described above.

Because Mr. Dondero is a beneficial owner, the Advisors are “Related Entities” under the January 9 Order. At the time of the January 9 Order, each of the Advisors was a party to a shared-services agreement with the Debtor. Under the respective shared-services agreements, the Debtor was required to provide a wide range of services and support to the Advisors (and by extension, to the Funds), including accounting, legal, clerical, valuation and other “back-office” services, as well as office space, in exchange for a fee. The Advisors’ compliance with their

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<sup>14</sup> The Advisors have filed a separate appeal from the Confirmation Order and have filed a separate petition seeking permission to appeal directly to this Court. That petition is docketed at No. 21-90011.

regulatory and fiduciary obligations to the Funds was facilitated by their access to shared services provided by the Debtor.

While the January 9 Order limited Mr. Dondero's ability to cause the Advisors to terminate agreements, the Debtor was not so limited. Thus, the Debtor notified the Advisors on November 30, 2020, that the shared-services agreements would be terminated effective January 31, 2021 (as extended, through February 28). In December 2020, the Advisors advised—and the Funds agreed—that the Advisors should seek limited relief from the Bankruptcy Court with respect to the Debtor's role as portfolio manager of the CLOs. Specifically, the Advisors and the Funds requested that the Bankruptcy Court prohibit the Debtor from trading or disposing of CLO assets pending the confirmation hearing on the Debtor's plan.<sup>15</sup> After the Bankruptcy Court denied the motion, the Advisors and the Funds requested that the Debtor not trade in CLO assets on a voluntary basis. The Debtor denied that request.

Outside of the bankruptcy context, the Funds collectively hold the majority of preference shares in three CLOs for which the respective portfolio-management agreements allow them to remove the Debtor as portfolio manager "for cause." While the Debtor remained in bankruptcy and before confirmation of the Plan, the

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<sup>15</sup> The CLO assets are not property of the bankruptcy estate; they are, instead, assets under the Debtor's management and for which the Debtor is paid a management fee.

Bankruptcy Court would have had to approve any such removal in the form of relief from the automatic stay. After confirmation, the general rule is that contracts may be terminated according to their terms, if those contracts have been assumed.

Over objections from the Funds and others, the Bankruptcy Court confirmed the Plan on February 22, 2021. The Debtor's representatives presented the Plan as an "asset-maximization plan." Under the confirmed Plan, the reorganized Debtor intends to liquidate its assets over the course of an approximate two-year period. In addition to liquidating its assets, the Debtor, having assumed the portfolio-management agreements, continues to manage the assets of others, including the CLOs. It similarly intends to liquidate the assets of others within the same period.

As noted, the Debtor assumed the portfolio-management agreements. However, the Plan goes further than merely assuming and reinstating those agreements and binding the parties to their written terms.

The Plan, as approved over objections by the Funds and others, includes a number of disputed provisions. Article IX includes both exculpation and injunction provisions:

### **C. Exculpation**

Subject in all respects to ARTICLE XII.D of this Plan, to the maximum extent permitted by applicable law, no Exculpated Party will have or incur, and each Exculpated Party is hereby exculpated from, any claim, obligation, suit, judgment, damage, demand, debt, right, Cause of Action, remedy, loss, and liability for conduct occurring on or after the

Petition Date in connection with or arising out of (i) the filing and administration of the Chapter 11 Case; (ii) the negotiation and pursuit of the Disclosure Statement, the Plan, or the solicitation of votes for, or confirmation of, the Plan; (iii) the funding or consummation of the Plan (including the Plan Supplement) or any related agreements, instruments, or other documents, the solicitation of votes on the Plan, the offer, issuance, and Plan Distribution of any securities issued or to be issued pursuant to the Plan, including the Claimant Trust Interests, whether or not such Plan Distributions occur following the Effective Date; (iv) the implementation of the Plan; and (v) any negotiations, transactions, and documentation in connection with the foregoing clauses (i)-(iv); *provided, however*, the foregoing will not apply to (a) any acts or omissions of an Exculpated Party arising out of or related to acts or omissions that constitute bad faith, fraud, gross negligence, criminal misconduct, or willful misconduct or (b) Strand or any Employee other than with respect to actions taken by such Entities from the date of appointment of the Independent Directors through the Effective Date. This exculpation shall be in addition to, and not in limitation of, all other releases, indemnities, exculpations, any other applicable law or rules, or any other provisions of this Plan, including ARTICLE IV.C.2, protecting such Exculpated Parties from liability.<sup>16</sup>

Article I.B of the Plan defines “Exculpated Parties” broadly:

“*Exculpated Parties*” means, collectively, (i) the Debtor and its successors and assigns, (ii) the Employees, (iii) Strand, (iv) the Independent Directors, (v) the Committee, (vi) the members of the Committee (in their official capacities), (vii) the Professionals retained by the Debtor and the Committee in the Chapter 11 Case, (viii) the CEO/CRO; and (ix) the Related Persons of each of the parties listed in (iv) through (viii) ...<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> See Plan at IX.C.

<sup>17</sup> *Id.* at I.B.

Thus, the approved Plan exculpates not only the Debtor but also the Independent Directors, employees of the Debtor, officers and directors of the Debtor and professionals retained by the Debtor—among others. That exculpation extends not only to creditors’ direct claims but to the negotiation, administration and implementation of the Plan as well as to ordinary business matters and post-confirmation matters related to plan implementation.<sup>18</sup>

The accompanying Plan injunction is broad as well. It provides, among other things, that “all Enjoined Parties are and shall be permanently enjoined, on and after the Effective Date, from taking any actions to interfere with the implementation or consummation of the Plan.”<sup>19</sup> (“Enjoined Parties” is defined broadly to include, among others, all entities that “have held, hold, or may hold claims against the Debtor’s equity interests and any entity “that has appeared and/or filed any motion, objection, or other pleading” in the Chapter-11 case.<sup>20</sup>) The Confirmation Order bars any Enjoined Party from commencing or pursuing a claim or cause of action against

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<sup>18</sup> To be clear, the exculpation is not a full release but imposition of a particularly high burden of proof on anyone seeking to assert a claim against an Exculpated Party. Essentially, an Exculpated Party is released unless its acts or omissions “constitute bad faith, fraud, gross negligence, criminal misconduct, or willful misconduct ...” Plan at IX.C. That heightened burden is material in that, among other things, it releases that large group of persons and entities from claims for negligence.

<sup>19</sup> Plan at IX.F.

<sup>20</sup> *Id.* at I.B.

any “Protected Party” unless the Bankruptcy Court first determines that the claim or cause of action is “colorable.”<sup>21</sup> (“Protected Parties” is defined broadly to include, among others, the Debtor, the Debtor’s employees, the Committee and its members and professionals retained by the Debtor and the Committee in the Chapter-11 case.<sup>22</sup>)

The Funds believe that the exculpation and gatekeeper/channeling-injunction provisions exceed the scope of what this Court has previously permitted. The Funds contend that these provisions restrict their ability to act quickly and appropriately in fulfillment of their investment objectives and impair their ability to protect their retail investors. The issue is of critical and practical importance to the Funds because they invest in a number of illiquid assets with a long-term investment horizon. On the other hand, the Debtor’s liquidation plan anticipates a short, two-year window for the Debtor to liquidate its assets as well as those assets it manages. Thus, the Debtor’s short-term liquidation goal conflicts with the Funds’ plan to hold the assets for a longer term. Were the Debtor to sell the CLO assets as planned, it would act against the Fund’s wishes, and the Funds believe the challenged Plan terms

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<sup>21</sup> Plan at IX.F.

<sup>22</sup> *Id.* at I.B.

improperly interfere with the Funds' right and ability to remove the manager in such a situation.

### QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the Court should accept direct review of the Bankruptcy Court's Confirmation Order because an immediate appeal may materially advance the progress of the case, *see* 28 U.S.C. § 158(d)(2)(A)(iii), since—

a. all parties concur that the interests at stake in this bankruptcy matter are such that, if the appeals are heard in the District Court, it is all but certain that the non-prevailing party or parties will then take an appeal or appeals to this Court;

b. all parties concur that, in light of the inevitability of this Court's review, requiring the parties to pursue appeals first in the District Court would delay finality of the Plan for the Debtor, creditors and other interested parties by a year or more; and

c. all parties concur that, in light of the inevitability of this Court's review, requiring the parties to pursue appeals first in the District Court would cause the parties collectively to incur hundreds of thousands of dollars in attorneys' fees for ultimately unnecessary proceedings in the District Court.

2. Whether the Court should accept direct review of the Bankruptcy Court's Confirmation Order because that order involves a question of law requiring resolution of conflicting decisions since a number of cases in this Circuit have interpreted *Pacific Lumber* to prohibit inclusion in a bankruptcy plan of broad exculpation and injunction provisions such as those the Bankruptcy Court approved in this case. *See* 28 U.S.C. § 158(d)(2)(A)(ii).

3. Whether the Court should accept direct review of the Confirmation Order because the Bankruptcy Court's holding that the protections the Bankruptcy Code affords to creditors' committees and their members may be extended to "other parties in a particular chapter 11 case that perform similar roles to a creditors' committee and its members" is a question of law as to which there is no controlling decision of this Court or the Supreme Court. *See* 28 U.S.C. § 158(d)(2)(A)(i).

### **REASONS FOR THE COURT TO GRANT THIS PETITION**

Section 158(d)(2) of Title 28 of the U.S. Code provides that a bankruptcy court may certify an order for direct appeal to the court of appeals when the order (1) involves a controlling issue of law as to which there is no controlling decision of the court of appeals or the Supreme Court, (2) the order involves a question of law requiring resolution of conflicting decisions or (3) an immediate appeal from the order may materially advance the progress of the case or proceeding in which the



appeal is taken. *See* 28 U.S.C. § 158(d)(2)(A)(i)-(iii); *In re OCA, Inc.*, 552 F.3d 413, 418 (5th Cir. 2008). If the bankruptcy court certifies the order, the would-be appellant must then file a petition with the court of appeals seeking permission to appeal under the same standard. *Id.*

The parties jointly asked the Bankruptcy Court to certify its confirmation order for direct appeal to this Court, and the Bankruptcy Court did so.<sup>23</sup>

***A. The Bankruptcy Court correctly determined that an immediate appeal would materially advance the progress of the case.***

In granting the parties’ joint motion for certification, the Bankruptcy Court agreed that “a direct appeal may materially advance the progress of the case or proceeding in which the appeal is taken.”<sup>24</sup> The Funds agree.

In *In re MPF Holding U.S. LLC*, 444 B.R. 719 (Bankr. S.D. Tex. 2011), a bankruptcy court held that a direct appeal would be appropriate because the stakes were sufficiently high that it was particularly likely that any decision by the district court would ultimately be appealed to this Court such that requiring the parties first to appeal to the district court would unnecessarily delay a final resolution of the

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<sup>23</sup> *See* Order Certifying Appeals of the Confirmation Order for Direct Appeal to the United States Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit (the “Certification Order”) (Tab “C”).

<sup>24</sup> *Id.* at 2.

bankruptcy. *Id.* at 727. This Court accepted and decided the appeal. *See* 701 F.3d 449 (5th Cir. 2012).

Moreover, as the parties informed the Bankruptcy Court in requesting its certification for direct appeal, the parties, creditors and others would benefit from a direct appeal in that they would have this Court's decision that much sooner and the bankruptcy case could be fully administered and closed. Among other things, as noted above the Debtor intends to take certain steps in the next two years—steps the Funds believe may impair their interests and those of the CLOs—and the Funds believe the Plan as confirmed leaves them with an insufficient remedy. When it reviews the Plan, this Court will of course either reject or allow the challenged provisions, but the progression of events and the Debtor's plans make it important for the parties to have that resolution sooner rather than later.

Thus, the case meets the requirements of Section 158(d)(2)(A)(iii), and the Funds request that the Court grant permission for a direct appeal from the Bankruptcy Court's Confirmation Order.

***B. The Bankruptcy Court's Confirmation Order involves questions of law on which lower courts have differed such that this Court's resolution is necessary.***

On at least one of the principal issues on which the Funds seek permission to appeal, the Bankruptcy Court's interpretation of the law conflicts with that of other

courts. While the Funds believe the Bankruptcy Court erred in not following *Pacific Lumber* such that its Confirmation Order should be reversed, they will focus here on detailing the conflict rather than arguing the ultimate merits because the conflict is the focus under § 158(d)(2)(A)(ii).

In this Circuit, *Pacific Lumber* is important—and, in the Funds view, controlling—authority regarding the permissible scope of exculpation provisions and related injunctions. The procedural background of *Pacific Lumber* is lengthy and complex, but the facts relevant here are neither. The bankruptcy court approved a plan that included an exculpation provision that protected not just the debtor but a number of other persons and entities, including the debtor’s personnel, the current owners of the reorganized debtor (MRC and Marathon) and two entities created by the plan (Newco and Townco) into which certain of the debtor’s assets were transferred as well as the personnel of those parties. On direct appeal from the bankruptcy court, this Court rejected the exculpation of non-debtor parties:

The plan releases MRC, Marathon, Newco, Townco, and the Unsecured Creditors’ Committee (and their personnel) from liability—other than for willfulness and gross negligence—related to proposing, implementing, and administering the plan. The law states, however, that “discharge of a debt of the debtor does not affect the liability of any other entity on such debt.” 11 U.S.C. § 524(e).

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We see little equitable about protecting the released non-debtors from negligence suits arising out of the reorganization. In a variety of contexts, this court has held that Section 524(e) only releases the

debtor, not co-liable third parties. *See, e.g., In re Coho Resources, Inc.*, 345 F.3d 338, 342 (5th Cir. 2003); *Hall v. National Gypsum Co.*, 105 F.3d 225, 229 (5th Cir. 1997); *Matter of Edgeworth*, 993 F.2d 51, 53-54 (5th Cir. 1993); *Feld v. Zale Corporation*, 62 F.3d 746 (5th Cir. 1995). These cases seem broadly to foreclose non-consensual non-debtor releases and permanent injunctions.

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There are no allegations in this record that either MRC/Marathon or their or the Debtors' officers or directors were jointly liable for any of Palco's or Scopac's pre-petition debt. They are not guarantors or sureties, nor are they insurers. Instead, the essential function of the exculpation clause proposed here is to absolve the released parties from any negligent conduct that occurred during the course of the bankruptcy. The fresh start § 524(e) provides to debtors is not intended to serve this purpose.

584 F.3d at 251-52 (footnotes omitted). A number of courts have interpreted *Pacific Lumber* broadly to reject exculpation provisions that reach beyond the debtor itself and the creditors' committee. For example, in *In re Patriot Place, Ltd.*, 486 B.R. 773 (Bankr. W.D. Tex. 2013), the court wrote that this Court "takes a very restrictive approach to non-debtor releases in bankruptcy cases" and cited *Pacific Lumber* for the proposition that "[t]he Fifth Circuit cases seem 'broadly to foreclose non-consensual non-debtor releases and permanent injunctions.'" 486 B.R. at 882. In *Dropbox, Inc. v. Thru, Inc. (In re Thru, Inc.)*, No. 3:17-CV-1958-G, 2018 WL 5113124 (N.D. Tex. Oct. 19, 2018), the district court rejected an exculpation clause much like the one in the Plan in this case and offered the following analysis:

In *In re The Pacific Lumber Company*, the plan in question released the debtor and its personnel from liability, other than for willfulness and gross negligence, “related to proposing, implementing, and administering the plan.” *In re The Pacific Lumber Company*, 584 F.3d at 251. There, the Fifth Circuit determined that the broad exculpation provision contained in the plan was designed “to absolve the released parties from any negligent conduct that occurred during the course of the bankruptcy” which the fresh start provision in Bankruptcy Code section 524(e)[14] was not intended to do. *Id.* at 252. Here, Thru’s plan releases Thru, its officers, directors, and various other personnel from liability, except for acts or omissions made in bad faith, “in connection with or related to formulating, negotiating, implementing, confirming, or consummating” the plan, disclosure statement, or any plan document. Modified Chapter 11 Plan at 25, ¶ 9.7 (emphasis added).

The appellees’ attempts to distinguish their plan’s exculpation language from that of the language used in *In re The Pacific Lumber Company* are unpersuasive.

*Id.* at \*22-\*23. The court also rejected an injunction provision that was “broad enough to cover non-debtor third parties ...” because the court read *Pacific Lumber* to preclude such an injunction. *Id.* at \*21 (citing *Pacific Lumber*, 584 F.3d at 252 (Fifth Circuit authority “seems broadly to foreclose non-consensual non-debtor releases and permanent injunction.”)).

A judge in the same bankruptcy court from which this matter arises understood *Pacific Lumber* to preclude non-consensual third-party exculpation:

The plan in *Pacific Lumber* provided numerous third parties with protection from liability for their negligent conduct during the course of the chapter 11 case including liability related to proposing, implementing, and administering the plan. The third-party protections in *Pacific Lumber* applied to the debtors’ officers and directors as well as

the companies that proposed the plan and that ultimately acquired majority ownership of the reorganized debtors. Although a third-party exculpation provision arguably might be defended as justified by the bankruptcy court's equitable powers given by Code § 105, Chief Judge of the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals Edith Jones struck the exculpatory provisions because the Court saw "little equitable about protecting the released non-debtors from negligence suits arising out of the reorganization." *Id.* at 252.

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Debtors and the Equity Committee argue that the ruling in *Pacific Lumber* is limited to the facts of that case. The court disagrees. Chief Judge Jones wrote that "non-debtor releases are most appropriate as a method to channel mass claims toward a specific pool of assets." *Id.* at 252. Chief Judge Jones also cited to several prior Fifth Circuit decisions ... stating that, "these cases seem broadly to foreclose non-consensual non-debtor releases and permanent injunctions." *Id.* These statements persuade the court that the ruling in *Pacific Lumber* is not limited to its facts. Indeed, there is nothing in the *Pacific Lumber* opinion which, in the court's view, can reasonably be read to limit its ruling to the facts of that case.

*In re Pilgrim's Pride Corp.*, 08-45664-DML-11, 2010 WL 200000 at \*4-\*5 (Bankr. N.D. Tex. Jan. 14, 2010).

The Bankruptcy Court in this matter understood *Pacific Lumber* differently.<sup>25</sup>

The court held that *Pacific Lumber* focused on 11 U.S.C. § 524(e) but that the case

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<sup>25</sup> The Bankruptcy Court wrote that certain earlier orders in the case, including the January 9 Order described in the statement of the case, above, and a July 16, 2020, order had already exculpated the Independent Directors and Mr. Seery and were due *res judicata* effect. See Confirmation Order at ¶ 73. When the merits are before this Court, the Funds will demonstrate that the Bankruptcy Court was mistaken in that determination, and in any event those orders would not shield the exculpation and injunction provisions from appellate review.

does not prohibit all exculpations under the Bankruptcy Code and the court in such case specifically approved the exculpations of a creditor's committee and its members on the grounds that "11 U.S.C. § 1103(c), which lists the creditors' committee's powers, implies committee members have qualified immunity for actions within the scope of their duties. ... [I]f members of the committee can be sued by persons unhappy with the committee's performance during the case or unhappy with the outcome of the case, it will be extremely difficult to find members to serve on the committee. *Pacific Lumber*'s rationale for permitted exculpation of creditors' committees and their members (which was clearly policy based and based on creditors' committee qualified immunity flowing from their duties under section 1103(c) of the Bankruptcy Code and their disinterestedness and importance in chapter 11 cases) does not preclude exculpation to other parties in a particular chapter 11 case that perform similar roles to a creditors' committee and its members."<sup>26</sup>

Thus, the Bankruptcy Court read *Pacific Lumber* as rejecting only third-party exculpations in the Section-524(e) context but not in others. That holding is plainly in conflict with cases like *Patriot Place*, 486 B.R. at 882 ("[t]he Fifth Circuit cases seem 'broadly to foreclose non-consensual non-debtor releases and permanent injunctions.'"), and *In re Thru*, 2018 WL 5113124 at \*22.

The Bankruptcy Court also overruled the Funds' objection that the Plan's channeling injunction is foreclosed by *Pacific Lumber* because it extends impermissibly to protect third parties.<sup>27</sup> As noted, *In re Thru* understood *Pacific*

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<sup>26</sup> Confirmation Order at ¶ 74(a).

<sup>27</sup> *Id.* at ¶¶ 75-76.



*Lumber* to prohibit non-consensual, permanent injunctions in favor of non-debtors.

*See In re Thru*, 2018 WL 5113124 at \*21.

While the Funds believe this Court will confirm that *Pacific Lumber* should be read more broadly than the Bankruptcy Court did, the Court need not decide that issue now. It is enough for the Court to decide that there are conflicting decisions in need of this Court's resolution. *See* § 158(d)(2)(A)(ii). There are.

**C. *The Bankruptcy Court's determination that certain protections afforded to a creditors' committee and its members should be extended to "other parties in a particular chapter 11 case that perform similar roles to a creditors' committee and its members" raises a question of law as to which there is no controlling authority.***

As noted in the previous section, in its discussion of *Pacific Lumber*, the Bankruptcy court held that

*Pacific Lumber's* rationale for permitted exculpation of creditors' committees and their members (which was clearly policy based and based on creditors' committee qualified immunity flowing from their duties under section 1103(c) of the Bankruptcy Code and their disinterestedness and importance in chapter 11 cases) does not preclude exculpation to other parties in a particular chapter 11 case that perform similar roles to a creditors' committee and its members.<sup>28</sup>

The Funds believe that protection-by-analogy holding is wrong under both *Pacific Lumber* and Section 1103(c), but for present purposes it is sufficient to say that the

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<sup>28</sup> *Id.* at ¶ 74(a).



Bankruptcy Court appears to be the first court to reach that holding and that neither this Court nor the Supreme Court has addressed it.

Section 158(d)(2)(A)(i) permits a direct appeal when the bankruptcy court's order "involves a question of law as to which there is no controlling decision of the court of appeals for the circuit or of the Supreme Court of the United States ..." The legal question of whether parties "that perform similar roles to a creditors' committee and its members" should be entitled to the same protections as creditors' committees and their members is such a question.

## CONCLUSION

Accordingly, the Funds respectfully request that the Court grant this petition and allow a direct appeal to this Court from the Bankruptcy Court's Confirmation Order.

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*Counsel for Petitioners*  
April 13, 2021

## **CERTIFICATE OF COMPLIANCE**

Pursuant to Federal Rule of Appellate Procedure 32(g), the undersigned counsel certifies that this brief:

(i) complies with the type-volume limitation of Federal Rule of Appellate Procedure 5(C)(1) because it contains 4,912 words, including footnotes and excluding the cover, certificate of interested persons, table of contents, table of authorities, certificate of compliance and certificate of service.

(ii) complies with the typeface requirements of Rule 32(a)(5) and the type-style requirements of Rule 32(a)(6) because it has been prepared using Microsoft Office Word 2010 and is set in Equity font in a size equivalent to 14 points or larger.

/s/ David R. Fine

### CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I certify that, on April 13, 2021, I filed the attached document with the Court's CM/ECF system and that I also e-mailed a copy with exhibits to the following:

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Tab “A”



CLERK, U.S. BANKRUPTCY COURT  
NORTHERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS

**ENTERED**

THE DATE OF ENTRY IS ON  
THE COURT'S DOCKET

The following constitutes the ruling of the court and has the force and effect therein described.

Signed February 22, 2021

  
United States Bankruptcy Judge

**IN THE UNITED STATES BANKRUPTCY COURT  
FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS  
DALLAS DIVISION**

In re:

HIGHLAND CAPITAL MANAGEMENT, L.P.,<sup>1</sup>

Debtor.

) Chapter 11

) Case No. 19-34054-sgj11

)

**ORDER (I) CONFIRMING THE FIFTH AMENDED  
PLAN OF REORGANIZATION OF HIGHLAND CAPITAL  
MANAGEMENT, L.P. (AS MODIFIED) AND (II) GRANTING RELATED RELIEF**

The Bankruptcy Court<sup>2</sup> having:

- a. entered, on November 24, 2020, the *Order (A) Approving the Adequacy of the Disclosure Statement, (B) Scheduling A Hearing to Confirm the Fifth Amended Plan of Reorganization (C) Establishing Deadline for Filing Objections to Confirmation of Plan, (D) Approving Form of Ballots, Voting Deadline and Solicitation Procedures, and (E) Approving Form and Manner of Notice* [Docket No. 1476] (the “Disclosure Statement Order”), pursuant to which the Bankruptcy Court approved the adequacy of the *Disclosure Statement Relating to the Fifth*

<sup>1</sup> The Debtor’s last four digits of its taxpayer identification number are (6725). The headquarters and service address for the above-captioned Debtor is 300 Crescent Court, Suite 700, Dallas, TX 75201.

<sup>2</sup> Capitalized terms used but not otherwise defined herein have the meanings given to them in the Plan (as defined below). The rules of interpretation set forth in Article I of the Plan apply to this Confirmation Order.

*Amended Plan of Reorganization of Highland Capital Management, L.P.* [Docket No. 1473] (the “Disclosure Statement”) under section 1125 of the Bankruptcy Code and authorized solicitation of the Disclosure Statement;

- b. set January 5, 2021, at 5:00 p.m. prevailing Central Time (the “Objection Deadline”), as the deadline for filing objections to confirmation of the *Fifth Amended Plan of Reorganization of Highland Capital Management, L.P. (As Modified)* [Docket No. 1808] (as amended, supplemented or modified, the “Plan”);
- c. set January 5, 2021, at 5:00 p.m. prevailing Central Time, as the deadline for voting on the Plan (the “Voting Deadline”) in accordance with the Disclosure Statement Order;
- d. initially set January 13, 2021, at 9:30 a.m. prevailing Central Time, as the date and time to commence the hearing to consider confirmation of the Plan pursuant to Bankruptcy Rules 3017 and 3018, sections 1126, 1128, and 1129 of the Bankruptcy Code, and the Disclosure Statement Order, which hearing was continued to January 26, 2021, at 9:30 a.m. prevailing Central Time and further continued to February 2, 2021;
- e. reviewed: (i) the Plan; (ii) the Disclosure Statement; and (iii) *Notice of (I) Entry of Order Approving Disclosure Statement; (II) Hearing to Confirm; and (III) Related Important Dates* (the “Confirmation Hearing Notice”), the form of which is attached as Exhibit 1-B to the Disclosure Statement Order;
- f. reviewed: (i) the *Debtor’s Notice of Filing of Plan Supplement for the Third Amended Plan of Reorganization of Highland Capital Management, L.P.* [Docket No. 1389] filed November 13, 2020; (ii) *Debtor’s Notice of Filing of Plan Supplement for the Fifth Amended Plan of Reorganization of Highland Capital Management, L.P.* [Docket No. 1606] filed on December 18, 2020; (iii) the *Debtor’s Notice of Filing of Plan Supplement for the Fifth Amended Plan of Reorganization of Highland Capital Management, L.P.* [Docket No. 1656] filed on January 4, 2021; (iv) *Notice of Filing Plan Supplement to the Fifth Amended Plan of Reorganization of Highland Capital Management, L.P. (with Technical Modifications)* dated January 22, 2021 [Docket No. 1811]; and (v) *Debtor’s Notice of Filing of Plan Supplement to the Fifth Amended Plan of Reorganization of Highland of Highland Capital Management, L.P. (As Modified)* on February 1, 2021 [Docket No. 1875]; (collectively, the documents listed in (i) through (v) of this paragraph, the “Plan Supplements”);
- g. reviewed: (i) the *Notice of (I) Executory Contracts and Unexpired Leases to be Assumed by the Debtor Pursuant to the Fifth Amended Plan, (II) Cure Amounts, if Any, and (III) Related Procedures in Connection Therewith* filed on December 30, 2020 [Docket No. 1648]; (ii) the *Second Notice of (I) Executory Contracts and*

*Unexpired Leases to be Assumed by the Debtor Pursuant to the Fifth Amended Plan, (II) Cure Amounts, if Any, and (III) Related Procedures in Connection Therewith* filed on January 11, 2021 [Docket No.1719]; (iii) the *Third Notice of (I) Executory Contracts and Unexpired Leases to be Assumed by the Debtor Pursuant to the Fifth Amended Plan, (II) Cure Amounts, if Any, and (III) Related Procedures in Connection Therewith* filed on January 15, 2021 [Docket No. 1749]; (iv) the *Notice of Withdrawal of Certain Executory Contracts and Unexpired Leases from List of Executory Contracts and Unexpired Leases to be Assumed by the Debtor Pursuant to the Fifth Amended Plan* [Docket No. 1791]; (v) the *Fourth Notice of (I) Executory Contracts and Unexpired Leases to be Assumed by the Debtor Pursuant to the Fifth Amended Plan (II) Cure Amounts, if Any, and (III) Released Procedures in Connection Therewith* filed on January 27, 2021 [Docket No. 1847]; (vi) the *Notice of Hearing on Agreed Motion to (I) Assume Nonresidential Real Property Lease with Crescent TC Investors, L.P. Upon Confirmation of Plan and (II) Extend Assumption Deadline* filed on January 28, 2021 [Docket No. 1857]; and (vii) the *Fifth Notice of (I) Executory Contracts and Unexpired Leases to be Assumed by the Debtor Pursuant to the Fifth Amended Plan (II) Cure Amounts, if Any, and (III) Released Procedures in Connection Therewith* filed on February 1, 2021 [Docket No. 1873] (collectively, the documents referred to in (i) to (vii) are referred to as “List of Assumed Contracts”);

- h. reviewed: (i) the *Debtor’s Memorandum of Law in Support of Confirmation of the Fifth Amended Plan of Reorganization of Highland Capital Management, L.P.* [Docket No. 1814] (the “Confirmation Brief”); (ii) the *Debtor’s Omnibus Reply to Objections to Confirmation of the Fifth Amended Chapter 11 Plan of Reorganization of Highland Capital Management*; [Docket No. 1807]; and (iii) the *Certification of Patrick M. Leathem With Respect to the Tabulation of Votes on the Fifth Amended Plan of Reorganization of Highland Capital Management, L.P.* [Docket No. 1772] and *Supplemental Certification of Patrick M. Leathem With Respect to the Tabulation of Votes on the Fifth Amended Plan of Reorganization of Highland Capital Management, L.P.* [Docket No. 1887] filed on February 3, 2021 (together, the “Voting Certifications”).
- i. reviewed: (i) the *Notice of Affidavit of Publication* dated December 3, 2020 [Docket No. 1505]; (ii) the *Certificate of Service* dated December 23, 2020 [Docket No. 1630]; (iii) the *Supplemental Certificate of Service* dated December 24, 2020 [Docket No. 1637]; (iv) the *Second Supplemental Certificate of Service* dated December 31, 2020 [Docket No. 1653]; (v) the *Certificate of Service* dated December 23, 2020 [Docket No. 1627]; (vi) the *Certificate of Service* dated January 6, 2021 [Docket No. 1696]; (vii) the *Certificate of Service* dated January 7, 2021 [Docket No. 1699]; (viii) the *Certificate of Service* dated January 7, 2021 [Docket No 1700]; (ix) the *Certificate of Service* dated January 15, 2021 [Docket No. 1761]; (x) the *Certificate of Service* dated January 19, 2021 [Docket No. 1775]; (xi) the



*Certificate of Service* dated January 20, 2021 [Docket No. 1787]; (xii) the *Certificate of Service* dated January 26, 2021 [Docket No. 1844]; (xiii) the *Certificate of Service* dated January 27, 2021 [Docket No. 1854]; (xiv) the *Certificate of Service* dated February 1, 2021 [Docket No. 1879]; (xv) the *Certificates of Service* dated February 3, 2021 [Docket No. 1891 and 1893]; and (xvi) the *Certificates of Service* dated February 5, 2021 [Docket Nos. 1906, 1907, 1908 and 1909] (collectively, the “Affidavits of Service and Publication”);

- j. reviewed all filed<sup>3</sup> pleadings, exhibits, statements, and comments regarding approval of the Disclosure Statement and confirmation of the Plan, including all objections, statements, and reservations of rights;
- k. conducted a hearing to consider confirmation of the Plan, which commenced on February 2, 2021, at 9:30 a.m. prevailing Central Time and concluded on February 3, 2021, and issued its oral ruling on February 8, 2021 (collectively, the “Confirmation Hearing”);
- l. heard the statements and arguments made by counsel in respect of confirmation of the Plan and having considered the record of this Chapter 11 Case and taken judicial notice of all papers and pleadings filed in this Chapter 11 Case; and
- m. considered all oral representations, testimony, documents, filings, and other evidence regarding confirmation of the Plan, including (a) all of the exhibits admitted into evidence;<sup>4</sup> (b) the sworn testimony of (i) James P. Seery, Jr., the Debtor’s Chief Executive Officer and Chief Restructuring Officer and a member of the Board of Directors of Strand Advisors, Inc. (“Strand”), the Debtor’s general partner; (ii) John S. Dubel, a member of the Board of Strand; (iii) Marc Tauber, a Vice President at Aon Financial Services; and (iv) Robert Jason Post, the Chief Compliance Officer of NexPoint Advisors, LP (collectively, the “Witnesses”); (c) the credibility of the Witnesses; and (d) the Voting Certifications.

NOW, THEREFORE, after due deliberation thereon and good cause appearing therefor, the Bankruptcy Court hereby makes and issues the following findings of fact and conclusions of law:

<sup>3</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, use of the term “filed” herein refers also to the service of the applicable document filed on the docket in this Chapter 11 Case, as applicable.

<sup>4</sup> The Court admitted the following exhibits into evidence: (a) all of the Debtor's exhibits lodged at Docket No. 1822 (except TTTTTT, which was withdrawn by the Debtor); (b) all of the Debtor's exhibits lodged at Docket No. 1866; (c) all of the Debtor's exhibits lodged at Docket No. 1877; (d) all of the Debtor's exhibits lodged at Docket No. 1895; and (e) Exhibits 6-12 and 15-17 offered by Mr. James Dondero and lodged at Docket No. 1874.

## **FINDINGS OF FACT AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW**

1. **Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law.** The findings and conclusions set forth herein, together with the findings of fact and conclusions of law set forth in the record during the Confirmation Hearing, constitute the Bankruptcy Court's findings of fact and conclusions of law pursuant to Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 52, made applicable to this proceeding pursuant to Bankruptcy Rules 7052 and 9014. To the extent any of the following findings of fact constitute conclusions of law, they are adopted as such. To the extent that any of the following conclusions of law constitute findings of fact, they are adopted as such.

2. **Introduction and Summary of the Plan.** Prior to addressing the specific requirements under the Bankruptcy Code and Bankruptcy Rules with respect to the confirmation of the Plan, the Bankruptcy Court believes it would be useful to first provide the following background of the Debtor's Chapter 11 Case, the parties involved therewith, and some of the major events that have transpired culminating in the filing and solicitation of the Plan of this very unusual case. Before the Bankruptcy Court is the *Debtor's Fifth Amended Plan of Reorganization of Highland Capital Management, L.P.*, filed on November 24, 2020, as modified on January 22, 2021 and again on February 1, 2021. The parties have repeatedly referred to the Plan as an "asset monetization plan" because it involves the orderly wind-down of the Debtor's estate, including the sale of assets and certain of its funds over time, with the Reorganized Debtor continuing to manage certain other funds, subject to the oversight of the Claimant Trust Oversight Board. The Plan provides for a Claimant Trust to, among other things, manage and monetize the Claimant Trust Assets for the benefit of the Debtor's economic stakeholders. The Claimant Trustee is responsible



bankruptcy case being filed on October 16, 2019 (the “Petition Date”). Mr. Dondero controlled the Debtor as of the Petition Date but agreed to relinquish control of it on or about January 9, 2020, pursuant to an agreement reached with the Committee, as described below. Although Mr. Dondero remained with the Debtor as an unpaid employee/portfolio manager after January 9, 2020, his employment with the Debtor terminated on October 9, 2020. Mr. Dondero continues to work for and/or control numerous non-debtor entities in the complex Highland enterprise.

5. **The Debtor.** The Debtor is headquartered in Dallas, Texas. As of the Petition Date, the Debtor employed approximately 76 employees. The Debtor is privately-owned: (a) 99.5% by the Hunter Mountain Investment Trust; (b) 0.1866% by The Dugaboy Investment Trust, a trust created to manage the assets of Mr. Dondero and his family; (c) 0.0627% by Mark Okada, personally and through family trusts; and (d) 0.25% by Strand, the Debtor’s general partner.

6. **The Highland Enterprise.** Pursuant to various contractual arrangements, the Debtor provides money management and advisory services for billions of dollars of assets, including collateralized loan obligation vehicles (“CLOs”), and other investments. Some of these assets are managed by the Debtor pursuant to shared services agreements with certain affiliated entities, including other affiliated registered investment advisors. In fact, there are approximately 2,000 entities in the byzantine complex of entities under the Highland umbrella. None of these affiliated entities filed for chapter 11 protection. Most, but not all, of these entities are not subsidiaries (direct or indirect) of the Debtor. Many of the Debtor’s affiliated companies are



The Debtor also did not suffer any type of catastrophic business calamity. In fact, the Debtor filed for Chapter 11 protection six months before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Rather, the Debtor filed for Chapter 11 protection due to a myriad of massive, unrelated, business litigation claims that it faced—many of which had finally become liquidated (or were about to become liquidated) after a decade or more of contentious litigation in multiple forums all over the world. The Committee in this case has referred to the Debtor—under its former chief executive, Mr. Dondero—as a “serial litigator.” The Bankruptcy Court agrees with that description. By way of example, the members of the Committee (and their history of litigation with the Debtor and others in the Highland complex) are as follows:

- a. **The Redeemer Committee of the Highland Crusader Fund (the “Redeemer Committee”).** This Committee member obtained an arbitration award against the Debtor in the amount of \$190,824,557, inclusive of interest, approximately five months before the Petition Date, from a panel of the American Arbitration Association. It was on the verge of having that award confirmed by the Delaware Chancery Court immediately prior to the Petition Date, after years of disputes that started in late 2008 (and included legal proceedings in Bermuda). This creditor’s claim was settled during this Chapter 11 Case in the amount of approximately \$137,696,610 (subject to other adjustments and details not relevant for this purpose).
- b. **Acis Capital Management, L.P., and Acis Capital Management GP, LLC (“Acis”).** Acis was formerly in the Highland complex of companies, but was not affiliated with Highland as of the Petition Date. This Committee member and its now-owner, Joshua Terry, were involved in litigation with the Debtor dating back to 2016. Acis was forced by Mr. Terry (who was a former Highland portfolio manager) into an involuntary chapter 11 bankruptcy in the Bankruptcy Court for the Northern District of Texas, Dallas Division before the Bankruptcy Court in 2018, after Mr. Terry obtained an approximately \$8 million arbitration award and judgment against Acis. Mr. Terry ultimately was awarded the equity ownership of Acis by the Bankruptcy Court in the Acis bankruptcy case. Acis subsequently asserted a multi-million dollar claim against Highland in the Bankruptcy Court for Highland’s alleged denuding of Acis to defraud its creditors—primarily Mr. Terry. The litigation involving Acis and Mr. Terry dates back to mid-2016 and has

- It is fair to say that the members of the Committee in this case all have wills of steel. They fought hard before and during this Chapter 11 Case. The members of the Committee, all of whom have volunteered to serve on the Claimant Trust Oversight Board post-confirmation, are highly sophisticated and have had highly sophisticated professionals representing them. They have represented their constituency in this case as fiduciaries extremely well.

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proof of claim in this Chapter 11 Case for \$40,710,819.42 relating to alleged breaches of employment-related agreements and for defamation arising from a 2017 press release posted by the Debtor. The Debtor and Mr. Daugherty recently announced a settlement of Mr. Daugherty's claim pursuant to which he will receive \$750,000 in cash on the Effective Date of the Plan, an \$8.25 million general unsecured claim, and a \$2.75 million subordinated claim (subject to other details not relevant for this purpose). Additionally, entities collectively known as "HarbourVest" invested more than \$70 million with an entity in the Highland complex and asserted a \$300 million proof of claim against the Debtor in this case, alleging, among other things, fraud and RICO violations. HarbourVest's claim was settled during the bankruptcy case for a \$45 million general unsecured claim and a \$35 million subordinated claim, and that settlement is also being appealed by a Dondero Entity.

10. **Other Claims Asserted.** Other than the Claims just described, most of the other Claims in this Chapter 11 Case are Claims asserted against the Debtor by: (a) entities in the Highland complex—most of which entities the Bankruptcy Court finds to be controlled by Mr. Dondero; (b) employees who contend that are entitled to large bonuses or other types of deferred compensation; and (c) numerous law firms that worked for the Debtor prior to the Petition Date and had outstanding amounts due for their prepetition services.

11. **Not Your Garden Variety Post-Petition Corporate Governance Structure.** Yet another reason this is not your garden variety chapter 11 case is its post-petition corporate governance structure. Immediately from its appointment, the Committee's relationship with the Debtor was contentious at best. First, the Committee moved for a change of venue from



Delaware to Dallas. Second, the Committee (and later, the United States Trustee) expressed its then-desire for the appointment of a chapter 11 trustee due to its concerns over and distrust of Mr. Dondero, his numerous conflicts of interest, and his history of alleged mismanagement (and perhaps worse).

12. **Post-Petition Corporate Governance Settlement with Committee.** After spending many weeks under the threat of the potential appointment of a trustee, the Debtor and Committee engaged in substantial and lengthy negotiations resulting in a corporate governance settlement approved by the Bankruptcy Court on January 9, 2020.<sup>5</sup> As a result of this settlement, among other things, Mr. Dondero relinquished control of the Debtor and resigned his positions as an officer or director of the Debtor and its general partner, Strand. As noted above, Mr. Dondero agreed to this settlement pursuant a stipulation he executed,<sup>6</sup> and he also agreed not to cause any Related Entity (as defined in the Settlement Motion) to terminate any agreements with the Debtor. The January 9 Order also (a) required that the Bankruptcy Court serve as “gatekeeper” prior to the commencement of any litigation against the three independent board members appointed to oversee and lead the Debtor’s restructuring in lieu of Mr. Dondero and (b) provided for the exculpation of those board members by limiting claims subject to the “gatekeeper” provision to those alleging willful misconduct and gross negligence.

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<sup>5</sup> This order is hereinafter referred to as the “January 9 Order” and was entered by the Court on January 9, 2020 [Docket No. 339] pursuant to the *Motion of the Debtor to Approve Settlement with Official Committee of Unsecured Creditors Regarding the Governance of the Debtor and Procedures for Operation in the Ordinary Course* [Docket No. 281] (the “Settlement Motion”).

<sup>6</sup> See *Stipulation in Support of Motion of the Debtor for Approval of Settlement With the Official Committee of Unsecured Creditors Regarding Governance of the Debtor and Procedures for Operations in Ordinary Course* [Docket No. 338] (the “Stipulation”).

13. **Appointment of Independent Directors.** As part of the Bankruptcy Court-approved settlement, three eminently qualified independent directors were chosen to lead Highland through its Chapter 11 Case. They are: James P. Seery, Jr., John S. Dubel (each chosen by the Committee), and Retired Bankruptcy Judge Russell Nelms. These three individuals are each technically independent directors of Strand (Mr. Dondero had previously been the sole director of Strand and, thus, the sole person in ultimate control of the Debtor). The three independent board members' resumes are in evidence. The Bankruptcy Court later approved Mr. Seery's appointment as the Debtor's Chief Executive Officer, Chief Restructuring Officer, and Foreign Representative. Suffice it to say that this settlement and the appointment of the independent directors changed the entire trajectory of the case and saved the Debtor from the appointment of a trustee. The Bankruptcy Court and the Committee each trusted the independent directors. They were the right solution at the right time. Because of the unique character of the Debtor's business, the Bankruptcy Court believed the appointment of three qualified independent directors was a far better outcome for creditors than the appointment of a conventional chapter 11 trustee. Each of the independent directors brought unique qualities to the table. Mr. Seery, in particular, knew and had vast experience at prominent firms with high-yield and distressed investing similar to the Debtor's business. Mr. Dubel had 40 years of experience restructuring large complex businesses and serving on boards in this context. And Retired Judge Nelms had not only vast bankruptcy experience but seemed particularly well-suited to help the Debtor maneuver through conflicts and ethical quandaries. By way of comparison, in the chapter 11 case of Acis, the former affiliate of Highland that the Bankruptcy Court presided over and which company was

much smaller in size and scope than Highland (managing only 5-6 CLOs), the creditors elected a chapter 11 trustee who was not on the normal trustee rotation panel in this district but, rather, was a nationally known bankruptcy attorney with more than 45 years of large chapter 11 experience. While the Acis chapter 11 trustee performed valiantly, he was sued by entities in the Highland complex shortly after he was appointed (which the Bankruptcy Court had to address). The Acis trustee was also unable to persuade the Debtor and its affiliates to agree to any actions taken in the case, and he finally obtained confirmation of Acis' chapter 11 plan over the objections of the Debtor and its affiliates on his fourth attempt (which confirmation was promptly appealed).

14. **Conditions Required by Independent Directors.** Given the experiences in Acis and the Debtor's culture of constant litigation, it was not as easy to get such highly qualified persons to serve as independent board members and, later, as the Debtor's Chief Executive Officer, as it would be in an ordinary chapter 11 case. The independent board members were stepping into a morass of problems. Naturally, they were worried about getting sued no matter how defensible their efforts—given the litigation culture that enveloped Highland historically. Based on the record of this Case and the proceedings in the Acis chapter 11 case, it seemed as though everything always ended in litigation at Highland. The Bankruptcy Court heard credible testimony that none of the independent directors would have taken on the role of independent director without (1) an adequate directors and officers' ("D&O") insurance policy protecting them; (2) indemnification from Strand that would be guaranteed by the Debtor; (3) exculpation for mere negligence claims; and (4) a gatekeeper provision prohibiting the commencement of litigation against the independent directors without the Bankruptcy Court's prior authority. This gatekeeper provision was also

included in the Bankruptcy Court's order authorizing the appointment of Mr. Seery as the Debtor's Chief Executive Officer, Chief Restructuring Officer, and Foreign Representative entered on July 16, 2020.<sup>7</sup> The gatekeeper provisions in both the January 9 Order and July 16 Order are precisely analogous to what bankruptcy trustees have pursuant to the so-called "Barton Doctrine" (first articulated in an old Supreme Court case captioned *Barton v. Barbour*, 104 U.S. 126 (1881)). The Bankruptcy Court approved all of these protections in the January 9 Order and the July 16 Order, and no one appealed either of those orders. As noted above, Mr. Dondero signed the Stipulation that led to the settlement that was approved by the January 9 Order. The Bankruptcy Court finds that, like the Committee, the independent board members have been resilient and unwavering in their efforts to get the enormous problems in this case solved. They seem to have at all times negotiated hard and in good faith, which culminated in the proposal of the Plan currently before the Bankruptcy Court. As noted previously, they completely changed the trajectory of this case.

15. **Not Your Garden Variety Mediators.** And still another reason why this was not your garden variety case was the mediation effort. In the summer of 2020, roughly nine months into the chapter 11 case, the Bankruptcy Court ordered mediation among the Debtor, Acis, UBS, the Redeemer Committee, and Mr. Dondero. The Bankruptcy Court selected co-mediators because mediation among these parties seemed like such a Herculean task—especially during COVID-19 where people could not all be in the same room. Those co-mediators were: Retired

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<sup>7</sup> See *Order Approving the Debtor's Motion Under Bankruptcy Code Sections 105(a) and 363(b) Authorizing Retention of James P. Seery, Jr., as Chief Executive Officer, Chief Restructuring Officer, and Foreign Representative Nunc Pro Tunc to March 15, 2020* [Docket No. 854] entered on July 16, 2020 (the "July 16 Order")

Bankruptcy Judge Alan Gropper from the Southern District of New York, who had a distinguished career presiding over complex chapter 11 cases, and Ms. Sylvia Mayer, who likewise has had a distinguished career, first as a partner at a preeminent law firm working on complex chapter 11 cases, and subsequently as a mediator and arbitrator in Houston, Texas. As noted earlier, the Redeemer Committee and Acis claims were settled during the mediation—which seemed nothing short of a miracle to the Bankruptcy Court—and the UBS claim was settled several months later and the Bankruptcy Court believes the ground work for that ultimate settlement was laid, or at least helped, through the mediation. And, as earlier noted, other significant claims have been settled during this case, including those of HarbourVest (who asserted a \$300 million claim) and Patrick Daugherty (who asserted a \$40 million claim). The Bankruptcy Court cannot stress strongly enough that the resolution of these enormous claims—and the acceptance by all of these creditors of the Plan that is now before the Bankruptcy Court—seems nothing short of a miracle. It was more than a year in the making.

16. **Not Your Garden Variety Plan Objectors (That Is, Those That Remain).** Finally, a word about the current, remaining objectors to the Plan before the Bankruptcy Court. Once again, the Bankruptcy Court will use the phrase “not your garden variety”, which phrase applies to this case for many reasons. Originally, there were over a dozen objections filed to the Plan. The Debtor then made certain amendments or modifications to the Plan to address some of these objections, none of which require further solicitation of the Plan for reasons set forth in more detail below. The only objectors to the Plan left at the time of the Confirmation Hearing

were Mr. Dondero [Docket No. 1661] and entities that the Bankruptcy Court finds are owned and/or controlled by him and that filed the following objections:

- a. *Objection to Confirmation of the Debtor's Fifth Amended Plan of Reorganization* (filed by Get Good Trust and The Dugaboy Investment Trust) [Docket No. 1667];
- b. *Objection to Confirmation of Fifth Amended Plan of Reorganization of Highland Capital Management, L.P.* (filed by Highland Capital Management Fund Advisors, L.P., Highland Fixed Income Fund, Highland Funds I and its series, Highland Funds II and its series, Highland Global Allocation Fund, Highland Healthcare Opportunities Fund, Highland Income Fund, Highland Merger Arbitrage Fund, Highland Opportunistic Credit Fund, Highland Small-Cap Equity Fund, Highland Socially Responsible Equity Fund, Highland Total Return Fund, Highland/iBoxx Senior Loan ETF, NexPoint Advisors, L.P., NexPoint Capital, Inc., NexPoint Real Estate Strategies Fund, NexPoint Strategic Opportunities Fund) [Docket No. 1670];
- c. *A Joinder to the Objection filed at 1670 by: NexPoint Real Estate Finance Inc., NexPoint Real Estate Capital, LLC, NexPoint Residential Trust, Inc., NexPoint Hospitality Trust, NexPoint Real Estate Partners, LLC, NexPoint Multifamily Capital Trust, Inc., VineBrook Homes Trust, Inc., NexPoint Real Estate Advisors, L.P., NexPoint Real Estate Advisors II, L.P., NexPoint Real Estate Advisors III, L.P., NexPoint Real Estate Advisors IV, L.P., NexPoint Real Estate Advisors V, L.P., NexPoint Real Estate Advisors VI, L.P., NexPoint Real Estate Advisors VII, L.P., NexPoint Real Estate Advisors VIII, L.P., and any funds advised by the foregoing* [Docket No. 1677];
- d. *NexPoint Real Estate Partners LLC's Objection to Debtor's Fifth Amended Plan of Reorganization* (filed by NexPoint Real Estate Partners LLC f/k/a HCRE Partners LLC) [Docket No. 1673]; and
- e. *NexBank's Objection to Debtor's Fifth Amended Plan of Reorganization* (filed by NexBank Title, Inc., NexBank Securities, Inc., NexBank Capital, Inc., and NexBank) [Docket No. 1676]. The entities referred to in (i) through (v) of this paragraph are hereinafter referred to as the "Dondero Related Entities").

#### 17. **Questionability of Good Faith as to Outstanding Confirmation**

**Objections.** Mr. Dondero and the Dondero Related Entities technically have standing to object to the Plan, but the remoteness of their economic interests is noteworthy, and the Bankruptcy Court

questions the good faith of Mr. Dondero's and the Dondero Related Entities' objections. In fact, the Bankruptcy Court has good reason to believe that these parties are not objecting to protect economic interests they have in the Debtor but to be disruptors. Mr. Dondero wants his company back. This is understandable, but it is not a good faith basis to lob objections to the Plan. As detailed below, the Bankruptcy Court has slowed down plan confirmation multiple times and urged the parties to talk to Mr. Dondero in an attempt to arrive at what the parties have repeatedly referred to as a "grand bargain," the ultimate goal to resolve the Debtor's restructuring. The Debtor and the Committee represent that they have communicated with Mr. Dondero regarding a grand bargain settlement, and the Bankruptcy Court believes that they have.

18. **Remote Interest of Outstanding Confirmation Objectors.** To be specific about the remoteness of Mr. Dondero's and the Dondero Related Entities' interests, the Bankruptcy Court will address them each separately. First, Mr. Dondero has a pending objection to the Plan. Mr. Dondero's only economic interest with regard to the Debtor is an unliquidated indemnification claim (and, based on everything the Bankruptcy Court has heard, his indemnification claims would be highly questionable at this juncture). Mr. Dondero owns no equity in the Debtor directly. Mr. Dondero owns the Debtor's general partner, Strand, which in turn owns a quarter percent of the total equity in the Debtor. Second, a joint objection has been filed by The Dugaboy Trust ("Dugaboy") and the Get Good Trust ("Get Good"). The Dugaboy Trust was created to manage the assets of Mr. Dondero and his family and owns a 0.1866% limited partnership interest in the Debtor. *See* Disclosure Statement at 7, n.3. The Bankruptcy Court is not clear what economic interest the Get Good Trust has, but it likewise seems to be related to Mr. Dondero. Get Good



filed three proofs of claim relating to a pending federal tax audit of the Debtor’s 2008 return, which the Debtor believes arise from Get Good’s equity security interests and are subject to subordination as set forth in its Confirmation Brief. Dugaboy filed three claims against the Debtor: (a) an administrative claim relating to the Debtor’s alleged postpetition management of Multi-Strat Credit Fund, L.P., (b) a prepetition claim against a subsidiary of the Debtor for which it seeks to pierce the corporate veil, each of which the Debtor maintains are frivolous in the Confirmation Brief, and (c) a claim arising from its equity security interest in the Debtor, which the Debtor asserts should be subordinated. Another group of objectors that has joined together in one objection is what the Bankruptcy Court will refer to as the “Highland Advisors and Funds.” See Docket No. 1863. The Bankruptcy Court understands they assert disputed administrative expense claims against the estate that were filed shortly before the Confirmation Hearing on January 23, 2021 [Docket No. 1826], and during the Confirmation Hearing on February 3, 2021 [Docket No. 1888]. At the Confirmation Hearing, Mr. Post testified on behalf of the Highland Advisors and Funds that the Funds have independent board members that run the Funds, but the Bankruptcy Court was not convinced of their independence from Mr. Dondero because none of the so-called independent board members have ever testified before the Bankruptcy Court and all have been engaged with the Highland complex for many years. Notably, the Court questions Mr. Post’s credibility because, after more than 12 years of service, he abruptly resigned from the Debtor in October 2020 at the exact same time that Mr. Dondero resigned at the Board of Directors’ request, and he is currently employed by Mr. Dondero. Moreover, Dustin Norris, a witness in a prior proceeding (whose testimony was made part of the record at the Confirmation Hearing), recently



testified on behalf of the Highland Advisors and Funds in another proceeding that Mr. Dondero owned and/or controlled these entities. Finally, various NexBank entities objected to the Plan. The Bankruptcy Court does not believe they have liquidated claims against the Debtor. Mr. Dondero appears to be in control of these entities as well.

19. **Background Regarding Dondero Objecting Parties.** To be clear, the Bankruptcy Court has allowed all these objectors to fully present arguments and evidence in opposition to confirmation, even though their economic interests in the Debtor appear to be extremely remote and the Bankruptcy Court questions their good faith. Specifically, the Bankruptcy Court considers them all to be marching pursuant to the orders of Mr. Dondero. In the recent past, Mr. Dondero has been subject to a temporary restraining order and preliminary injunction by the Bankruptcy Court for interfering with Mr. Seery's management of the Debtor in specific ways that were supported by evidence. Around the time that this all came to light and the Bankruptcy Court began setting hearings on the alleged interference, Mr. Dondero's company phone, which he had been asked to turn in to Highland, mysteriously went missing. The Bankruptcy Court merely mentions this in this context as one of many reasons that the Bankruptcy Court has to question the good faith of Mr. Dondero and his affiliates in raising objections to confirmation of the Plan.

20. **Other Confirmation Objections.** Other than the objections filed by Mr. Dondero and the Dondero Related Entities, the only other pending objection to the Plan is the *United States Trustee's Limited Objection to Confirmation of Debtor's Fifth Amended Plan of Reorganization* [Docket No. 1671], which objected to the Plan's exculpation, injunction, and

Debtor release provisions. In juxtaposition, to these pending objections, the Bankruptcy Court notes that the Debtor resolved the following objections to the Plan:

- a. *CLO Holdco, Ltd.'s Joinder to Objection to Confirmation of Fifth Amended Plan of Reorganization of Highland Capital Management, L.P. and Supplemental Objections to Plan Confirmation* [Docket No. 1675]. This Objection has been resolved pursuant to mutually agreed language by the parties set forth in paragraph VV of the Confirmation Order;
- b. *Objection of Dallas County, City of Allen, Allen ISD, City of Richardson, and Kaufman County to Confirmation of the Fifth Amended Plan of Reorganization of Highland Capital Management, L.P.* [Docket No. 1662]. This Objection has been resolved pursuant to mutually agreed language by the parties set forth in paragraph QQ of the Confirmation Order;
- c. *Senior Employees' Limited Objection to Debtor's Fifth Amended Plan of Reorganization (filed by Scott Ellington, Thomas Surgent, Frank Waterhouse, Isaac Leventon)* [Docket No. 1669]. This Objection has been resolved pursuant to mutually agreed language by the parties set forth in paragraph 82 and paragraphs RR and SS of the Confirmation Order;
- d. *Limited Objection of Jack Yang and Brad Borud to Fifth Amended Plan of Reorganization of Highland Capital Management, L.P.* [Docket No. 1666] and the amended joinder filed by Davis Deadman, Paul Kauffman and Todd Travers [Docket No. 1679]. This Objection and the amended joinder were resolved by agreement of the parties pursuant to modifications to the Plan filed by the Debtor;
- e. *United States' (IRS) Limited Objection to Debtor's Fifth Amended Plan of Reorganization* [Docket No. 1668]. This Objection has been resolved pursuant to mutually agreed language by the parties set forth in paragraphs TT and UU of the Confirmation Order; and
- f. *Patrick Hagaman Daugherty's Objection to Confirmation of Fifth Amended Plan of Reorganization* [Docket No. 1678]. This objection was resolved by the parties pursuant to the settlement of Mr. Daugherty's claim announced on the record of the Confirmation Hearing.

21. **Capitalized Terms.** Capitalized terms used herein, but not defined herein, shall have the respective meanings attributed to such terms in the Plan and the Disclosure Statement, as applicable.

22. **Jurisdiction and Venue.** The Bankruptcy Court has jurisdiction over the Debtor's Chapter 11 Case pursuant to 28 U.S.C. §§ 157 and 1334. This is a core proceeding pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 157(b)(2). Venue of this proceeding and this Chapter 11 Case is proper in this district and in the Bankruptcy Court pursuant to 28 U.S.C. §§ 1408 and 1409.

23. **Chapter 11 Petition.** On the Petition Date, the Debtor commenced a voluntary case under chapter 11 of the Bankruptcy Code in the United States Bankruptcy Court for the District of Delaware, which case was transferred to the Bankruptcy Court on December 19, 2019. The Debtor continues to operate its business and manage its property as debtor in possession pursuant to sections 1107(a) and 1108 of the Bankruptcy Code. No trustee or examiner has been appointed in this Chapter 11 Case. The Office of the United States Trustee appointed the Committee on October 29, 2019.

24. **Judicial Notice.** The Bankruptcy Court takes judicial notice of the docket in this Chapter 11 Case maintained by the clerk of the Bankruptcy Court and the court-appointed claims agent, Kurtzman Carson Consultants LLC ("KCC"), including, without limitation, all pleadings, notices, and other documents filed, all orders entered, and all evidence and arguments made, proffered or adduced at the hearings held before the Bankruptcy Court during this Chapter 11 Case, including, without limitation, the hearing to consider the adequacy of the Disclosure Statement and the Confirmation Hearing, as well as all pleadings, notices, and other documents filed, all orders entered, and all evidence and arguments made, proffered, or adduced at hearings held before the Bankruptcy Court or the District Court for the Northern District of Texas in

connection with an adversary proceeding or appellate proceeding, respectively, related to this Chapter 11 Case.

25. **Plan Supplement Documents.** Prior to the Confirmation Hearing, the Debtor filed each of the Plan Supplements. The Plan Supplements contain, among other documents, the Retained Causes of Action, the Claimant Trust Agreement, the Litigation Sub-Trust Agreement, the Senior Employee Stipulation, the Related Entity List, the Schedule of Employees, the Reorganized Limited Partnership Agreement, supplements to the Liquidation Analysis/Financial Projections, the Schedule of Contracts and Leases to be Assumed, and the other Plan Documents set forth therein (collectively, the “Plan Supplement Documents”).

26. **Retained Causes of Action Adequately Preserved.** The Bankruptcy Court finds that the list of Retained Causes of Action included in the Plan Supplements sufficiently describes all potential Retained Causes of Action, provides all persons with adequate notice of any Causes of Action regardless of whether any specific claim to be brought in the future is listed therein or whether any specific potential defendant or other party is listed therein, and satisfies applicable law in all respects to preserve all of the Retained Causes of Action. The definition of the Causes of Action and Schedule of Retained Causes of Action, and their inclusion in the Plan, specifically and unequivocally preserve the Causes of Action for the benefit of the Reorganized Debtor, the Claimant Trust, or the Litigation Sub-Trust, as applicable.

27. **Plan Modifications Are Non-Material.** In addition to the Plan Supplements, the Debtor made certain non-material modifications to the Plan, which are reflected in (i) the *Redline of Fifth Amended Plan of Reorganization of Highland Capital Management, L.P.*

(as Modified) filed on January 22, 2021 [Docket No. 1809], and (ii) Exhibit B to the *Debtor's Notice of Filing of Plan Supplement to Fifth Amended Plan of Reorganization of Highland Capital Management, L.P. (as Modified)* filed on February 1, 2021 [Docket No. 1875] (collectively, the “Plan Modifications”). Section 1127(a) of the Bankruptcy Code provides that a plan proponent may modify its plan at any time before confirmation so long as such modified plan meets the requirements of sections 1122 and 1123 of the Bankruptcy Code. None of the modifications set forth in the Plan Supplements or the Plan Modifications require any further solicitation pursuant to sections 1125, 1126, or 1127 of the Bankruptcy Code and Bankruptcy Rule 3019, because, among other things, they do not materially adversely change the treatment of the claims of any creditors or interest holders who have not accepted, in writing, such supplements and modifications. Among other things, there were changes to the projections that the Debtor filed shortly before the Confirmation Hearing (which included projected distributions to creditors and a comparison of projected distributions under the Plan to potential distributions under a hypothetical chapter 7 liquidation). The Plan Supplements and Plan Modifications did not mislead or prejudice any creditors or interest holders nor do they require that Holders of Claims or Equity Interests be afforded an opportunity to change previously cast votes to accept or reject the Plan. Specifically, the Amended Liquidation Analysis/Financial Projections filed on February 1, 2021 [Docket No. 1875] do not constitute any material adverse change to the treatment of any creditors or interest holders but, rather, simply update the estimated distributions based on Claims that were settled in the interim and provide updated financial data. The filing and notice of the Plan Supplements and Plan Modifications were appropriate and complied with the requirements of

section 1127(a) of the Bankruptcy Code and the Bankruptcy Rules, and no other solicitation or disclosure or further notice is or shall be required. The Plan Supplements and Plan Modifications each became part of the Plan pursuant section 1127(a) of the Bankruptcy Code. The Debtor or Reorganized Debtor, as applicable, is authorized to modify the Plan or Plan Supplement Documents following entry of this Confirmation Order in a manner consistent with section 1127(b) of the Bankruptcy Code, the Plan, and, if applicable, the terms of the applicable Plan Supplement Document.

28. **Notice of Transmittal, Mailing and Publication of Materials.** As is evidenced by the Voting Certifications and the Affidavits of Service and Publication, the transmittal and service of the Plan, the Disclosure Statement, Ballots, and Confirmation Hearing Notice were adequate and sufficient under the circumstances, and all parties required to be given notice of the Confirmation Hearing (including the deadline for filing and serving objections to the confirmation of the Plan) have been given due, proper, timely, and adequate notice in accordance with the Disclosure Statement Order and in compliance with the Bankruptcy Code, the Bankruptcy Rules, the Local Rules, and applicable non-bankruptcy law, and such parties have had an opportunity to appear and be heard with respect thereto. No other or further notice is required. The publication of the Confirmation Hearing Notice, as set forth in the *Notice of Affidavit of Publication* dated December 3, 2020 [Docket No. 1505], complied with the Disclosure Statement Order.

29. **Voting.** The Bankruptcy Court has reviewed and considered the Voting Certifications. The procedures by which the Ballots for acceptance or rejection of the Plan were

distributed and tabulated, including the tabulation as subsequently amended to reflect the settlement of certain Claims to be Allowed in Class 7, were fairly and properly conducted and complied with the Disclosure Statement Order, the Bankruptcy Code, the Bankruptcy Rules, and the Local Rules.

30. **Bankruptcy Rule 3016(a).** In accordance with Bankruptcy Rule 3016(a), the Plan is dated and identifies the Debtor as the proponent of the Plan.

31. **Plan Compliance with Bankruptcy Code (11 U.S.C. § 1129(a)(1)).** As set forth below, the Plan complies with all of the applicable provisions of the Bankruptcy Code, thereby satisfying section 1129(a)(1) of the Bankruptcy Code.

32. **Proper Classification (11 U.S.C. §§ 1122, 1123(a)(1)).** Section 1122 of the Bankruptcy Code provides that a plan may place a claim or interest in a particular class only if such claim or interest is substantially similar to the other claims or interest of such class. The Claims and Equity Interests placed in each Class are substantially similar to other Claims and Equity Interests, as the case may be, in each such Class. Valid business, factual, and legal reasons exist for separately classifying the various Classes of Claims and Equity Interests created under the Plan, and such Classes do not unfairly discriminate between Holders of Claims and Equity Interests.

33. **Classification of Secured Claims.** Class 1 (Jefferies Secured Claim) and Class 2 (Frontier Secured Claim) each constitute separate secured claims held by Jefferies LLC and Frontier State Bank, respectively, and it is proper and consistent with section 1122 of the Bankruptcy Code to separately classify the claims of these secured creditors. Class 3 (Other

Secured Claims) consists of other secured claims (to the extent any exist) against the Debtor, are not substantially similar to the Secured Claims in Class 1 or Class 2, and are also properly separately classified.

34. **Classification of Priority Claims.** Class 4 (Priority Non-Tax Claims) consists of Claims entitled to priority under section 507(a), other than Priority Tax Claims, and are properly separately classified from non-priority unsecured claims. Class 5 (Retained Employee Claims) consists of the potential claims of employees who may be retained by the Debtor on the Effective Date, which claims will be Reinstated under the Plan, are not substantially similar to other Claims against the Debtor, and are properly classified.

35. **Classification of Unsecured Claims.** Class 6 (PTO Claims) consists solely of the claims of the Debtor's employees for unpaid paid time off in excess of the \$13,650 statutory cap amount under sections 507(a)(4) and (a)(5) of the Bankruptcy Code and are dissimilar from other unsecured claims in Class 7 and Class 8. Class 7 (Convenience Claims) allows holders of eligible and liquidated Claims (below a certain threshold dollar amount) to receive a cash payout of the lesser of 85% of the Allowed amount of the creditor's Claim or such holder's *pro rata* share of the Convenience Claims Cash Pool. Class 7 (Convenience Claims) are provided for administrative convenience purposes in order to allow creditors, most of whom are either trade creditors or holders of professional claims, to receive treatment provided under Class 7 in lieu of the treatment of Class 8 (General Unsecured Claims). The Plan also provides for reciprocal "opt out" mechanisms to allow holders of Class 7 Claims to elect to receive the treatment for Class 8 Claims. Class 8 creditors primarily constitute the litigation claims of the Debtor. Class 8 Creditors



will receive Claimant Trust Interests which will be satisfied pursuant to the terms of the Plan. Class 8 also contains an “opt out” mechanism to allow holders of liquidated Class 8 Claims at or below a \$1 million threshold to elect to receive the treatment of Class 7 Convenience Claims. The Claims in Class 7 (primarily trade and professional Claims against the Debtor) are not substantially similar to the Claims in Class 8 (primarily the litigation Claims against the Debtor), and are appropriately separately classified. Valid business reasons also exist to classify creditors in Class 7 separately from creditors in Class 8. Class 7 creditors largely consist of liquidated trade or service providers to the Debtor. In addition, the Claims of Class 7 creditors are small relative to the large litigation claims in Class 8. Furthermore, the Class 8 Claims were overwhelmingly unliquidated when the Plan was filed. The nature of the Class 7 Claims as being largely liquidated created an expectation of expedited payment relative to the largely unliquidated Claims in Class 8, which consists in large part of parties who have been engaged in years, and in some cases over a decade of litigation with the Debtor. Separate classification of Class 7 and Class 8 creditors was the subject of substantial arm’s-length negotiations between the Debtor and the Committee to appropriately reflect these relative differences.

36. **Classification of Equity Interests.** The Plan properly separately classifies the Equity Interests in Class 10 (Class B/C Limited Partnership Interests) from the Equity Interests in Class 11 (Class A Limited Partnership Interests) because they represent different types of equity security interests in the Debtor and different payment priorities.

37. **Elimination of Vacant Classes.** Section III.C of the Plan provides for the elimination of Classes that do not have at least one holder of a Claim or Equity Interest that is

Allowed in an amount greater than zero for purposes of voting to accept or reject the Plan, and are disregarded for purposes of determining whether the Plan satisfies section 1129(a)(8) of the Bankruptcy Code with respect to such Class. The purpose of this provision is to provide that a Class that does not have voting members shall not be included in the tabulation of whether that Class has accepted or rejected the Plan. Pursuant to the Voting Certifications, the only voting Class of Claims or Equity Interests that did not have any members is Class 5 (Retained Employees). As noted above, Class 5 does not have any voting members because any potential Claims in Class 5 would not arise, except on account of any current employees of the Debtor who may be employed as of the Effective Date, which is currently unknown. Thus, the elimination of vacant Classes provided in Article III.C of the Plan does not violate section 1122 of the Bankruptcy Code. Class 5 is properly disregarded for purposes of determining whether or not the Plan has been accepted under Bankruptcy Code section 1129(a)(8) because there are no members in that Class. However, the Plan properly provides for the treatment of any Claims that may potentially become members of Class 5 as of the Effective Date in accordance with the terms of the Plan. The Plan therefore satisfies section 1122 of the Bankruptcy Code.

38. **Classification of Claims and Designation of Non-Classified Claims (11 U.S.C. §§ 1122, 1123(a)(1)).** Section 1123(a)(1) of the Bankruptcy Code requires that the Plan specify the classification of claims and equity security interests pursuant to section 1122 of the Bankruptcy Code, other than claims specified in sections 507(a)(2), 507(a)(3), or 507(a)(8) of the Bankruptcy Code. In addition to Administrative Claims, Professional Fee Claims, and Priority Tax Claims, each of which need not be classified pursuant to section 1123(a)(1) of the Bankruptcy

Code, the Plan designates eleven (11) Classes of Claims and Equity Interests. The Plan satisfies sections 1122 and 1123(a)(1) of the Bankruptcy Code.

39. **Specification of Unimpaired Classes (11 U.S.C. § 1123(a)(2)).** Article III of the Plan specifies that each of Class 1 (Jefferies Secured Claim), Class 3 (Other Secured Claims), Class 4 (Priority Non-Tax Claims), Class 5 (Retained Employee Claims), and Class 6 (PTO Claims) are Unimpaired under the Plan. Thus, the requirement of section 1123(a)(2) of the Bankruptcy Code is satisfied.

40. **Specification of Treatment of Impaired Classes (11 U.S.C. § 1123(a)(3)).** Article III of the Plan designates each of Class 2 (Frontier Secured Claim), Class 7 (Convenience Claims), Class 8 (General Unsecured Claims), Class 9 (Subordinated Claims), Class 10 (Class B/C Limited Partnership Interests), and Class 11 (Class A Limited Partnership Interests) as Impaired and specifies the treatment of Claims and Equity Interests in such Classes. Thus, the requirement of section 1123(a)(3) of the Bankruptcy Code is satisfied.

41. **No Discrimination (11 U.S.C. § 1123(a)(4)).** The Plan provides for the same treatment by the Plan proponent for each Claim or Equity Interest in each respective Class unless the Holder of a particular Claim or Equity Interest has agreed to a less favorable treatment of such Claim or Equity Interest. The Plan satisfies this requirement because Holders of Allowed Claims or Equity Interests in each Class will receive the same rights and treatment as other Holders of Allowed Claims or Equity Interests within such holder's respective class, subject only to the voluntary "opt out" options afforded to members of Class 7 and Class 8 in accordance with the terms of the Plan. Thus, the requirement of section 1123(a)(4) of the Bankruptcy Code is satisfied.

42. **Implementation of the Plan (11 U.S.C. § 1123(a)(5)).** Article IV of the Plan sets forth the means for implementation of the Plan which includes, but is not limited to, the establishment of: (i) the Claimant Trust; (ii) the Litigation Sub-Trust; (iii) the Reorganized Debtor; and (iv) New GP LLC, in the manner set forth in the Plan Documents, the forms of which are included in the Plan Supplements.

- a. **The Claimant Trust.** The Claimant Trust Agreement provides for the management of the Claimant Trust, as well as the Reorganized Debtor with the Claimant Trust serving as the managing member of New GP LLC (a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Claimant Trust that will manage the Reorganized Debtor as its general partner). The Claimant Trust, the Claimant Trustee, the management and monetization of the Claimant Trust Assets, and the management of the Reorganized Debtor (through the Claimant Trust's role as managing member of New GP LLC) and the Litigation Sub-Trust will all be managed and overseen by the Claimant Trust Oversight Committee. Additionally, the Plan provides for the transfer to the Claimant Trust of all of the Debtor's rights, title, and interest in and to all of the Claimant Trust Assets in accordance with section 1141 of the Bankruptcy Code and for the Claimant Trust Assets to automatically vest in the Claimant Trust free and clear of all Claims, Liens, encumbrances, or interests subject only to the Claimant Trust Interests and the Claimant Trust Expenses, as provided for in the Claimant Trust Agreement. The Claimant Trust will administer the Claimant Trust Assets as provided under the Plan and the Claimant Trust Agreement contained in the Plan Supplements.
- b. **The Litigation Sub-Trust.** The Plan and the Litigation Sub-Trust Agreement provide for the transfer to the Litigation Sub-Trust all of the Claimant Trust's rights, title, and interest in and to all of the Estate Claims (as transferred to the Claimant Trust by the Debtor) in accordance with section 1141 of the Bankruptcy Code and for the Estate Claims to automatically vest in the Litigation Sub-Trust free and clear of all Claims, Liens, encumbrances, or interests subject only to the Litigation Sub-Trust Interests and the Litigation Sub-Trust Expenses, as provided for in the Litigation Sub-Trust Agreement. The Litigation Trustee is charged with investigating, pursuing, and otherwise resolving any Estate Claims (including those with respect to which the Committee has standing to pursue prior to the Effective Date pursuant to the January 9 Order) pursuant to the terms of the Litigation Sub-Trust Agreement and the Plan, regardless of whether any litigation with respect to any Estate Claim was commenced by the Debtor or the Committee prior to the Effective Date.

- c. **The Reorganized Debtor.** The Reorganized Debtor will administer the Reorganized Debtor Assets, which includes managing the wind down of the Managed Funds.

The precise terms governing the execution of these restructuring transactions are set forth in greater detail in the applicable definitive documents included in the Plan Supplements, including the Claimant Trust Agreement, the Litigation Sub-Trust Agreement, and the Schedule of Retained Causes of Action. The Plan, together with the documents and forms of agreement included in the Plan Supplements, provides a detailed blueprint for the transactions contemplated by the Plan. The Plan's various mechanisms provide for the Debtor's continued management of its business as it seeks to liquidate the Debtor's assets, wind down its affairs, and pay the Claims of the Debtor's creditors. Upon full payment of Allowed Claims, plus interest as provided in the Plan, any residual value would then flow to the holders of Class 10 (Class B/C Limited Partnership Interests), and Class 11 (Class A Limited Partnership Interests). Finally, Mr. Seery testified that the Debtor engaged in substantial and arm's length negotiations with the Committee regarding the Debtor's post-Effective Date corporate governance, as reflected in the Plan. Mr. Seery testified that he believes the selection of the Claimant Trustee, Litigation Trustee, and members of the Claimant Trust Oversight Board are in the best interests of the Debtor's economic constituents. Thus, the requirements of section 1123(a)(5) of the Bankruptcy Code are satisfied.

43. **Non-Voting Equity Securities (11 U.S.C. § 1123(a)(6)).** The Debtor is not a corporation and the charter documents filed in the Plan Supplements otherwise comply with section 1123(a)(6) of the Bankruptcy Code. Therefore, the requirement of section 1123(a)(6) of the Bankruptcy Code is satisfied.

44. **Selection of Officers and Directors (11 U.S.C. § 1123(a)(7)).** Article IV

of the Plan provides for the Claimant Trust to be governed and administered by the Claimant Trustee. The Claimant Trust, the management of the Reorganized Debtor, and the management and monetization of the Claimant Trust Assets and the Litigation Sub-Trust will be managed by the Claimant Trust Oversight Board. The Claimant Trust Oversight Board will consist of: (1) Eric Felton, as representative of the Redeemer Committee; (2) Joshua Terry, as representative of Acis; (3) Elizabeth Kozlowski, as representative of UBS; (4) Paul McVoy, as representative of Meta-E Discovery; and (5) David Pauker. Four of the members of the Claimant Trust Oversight Committee are the holders of several of the largest Claims against the Debtor and/or are current members of the Committee. Each of these creditors has actively participated in the Debtor's case, both through their fiduciary roles as Committee members and in their individual capacities as creditors. They are therefore intimately familiar with the Debtor, its business, and assets. The fifth member of the Claimant Trust Oversight Board, David Pauker, is a disinterested restructuring advisor and turnaround manager with more than 25 years of experience advising public and private companies and their investors, and he has substantial experience overseeing, advising or investigating troubled companies in the financial services industry and has advised or managed such companies on behalf of boards or directors, court-appointed trustees, examiners and special masters, government agencies, and private investor parties. The members of the Claimant Trust Oversight Board will serve without compensation, except for Mr. Pauker, who will receive payment of \$250,000 for his first year of service, and \$150,000 for subsequent years.

45. **Selection of Trustees.** The Plan Supplements disclose that Mr. Seery will serve as the Claimant Trustee and Marc Kirschner will serve as the Litigation Trustee. As noted above, Mr. Seery has served as an Independent Board member since January 2020, and as the Chief Executive Officer and Chief Restructuring Officer since July 2020, and he has extensive management and restructuring experience, as evidenced from his curriculum vitae which is part of the record. The evidence shows that Mr. Seery is intimately familiar with the Debtor's organizational structure, business, and assets, as well as how Claims will be treated under the Plan. Accordingly, it is reasonable and in the Estate's best interests to continue Mr. Seery's employment post-emergence as the Claimant Trustee. Mr. Seery, upon consultation with the Committee, testified that he intends to employ approximately 10 of the Debtor's employees to enable him to manage the Debtor's business until the Claimant Trust effectively monetizes its remaining assets, instead of hiring a sub-servicer to accomplish those tasks. Mr. Seery testified that he believes that the Debtor's post-confirmation business can most efficiently and cost-effectively be supported by a sub-set of the Debtor's current employees, who will be managed internally. Mr. Seery shall initially be paid \$150,000 per month for services rendered after the Effective Date as Claimant Trustee; however, Mr. Seery's long-term salary as Claimant Trustee and the terms of any bonuses and severance are subject to further negotiation by Mr. Seery and the Claimant Trust Oversight Board within forty-five (45) days after the Effective Date. The Bankruptcy Court has also reviewed Mr. Kirschner's curriculum vitae. Mr. Kirschner has been practicing law since 1967 and has substantial experience in bankruptcy litigation matters, particularly with respect to his prior experience as a litigation trustee for several litigation trusts, as set forth on the record of the

Confirmation Hearing and in the Confirmation Brief. Mr. Kirschner shall be paid \$40,000 per month for the first three months and \$20,000 per month thereafter, plus a success fee related to litigation recoveries. The Committee and the Debtor had arm's lengths negotiations regarding the post-Effective Date corporate governance structure of the Reorganized Debtor and believe that the selection of the Claimant Trustee, the Litigation Trustee, and the Claimant Trust Oversight Committee are in the best interests of the Debtor's economic stakeholders. Section 1123(a)(7) of the Bankruptcy Code is satisfied.

**46. Debtor's Compliance with Bankruptcy Code (11 U.S.C. § 1129(a)(2)).**

Pursuant to section 1129(a)(2) of the Bankruptcy Code, the Debtor has complied with the applicable provisions of the Bankruptcy Code, including sections 1122, 1123, 1124, 1125, and 1126 of the Bankruptcy Code, the Bankruptcy Rules, and the Disclosure Statement Order governing notice, disclosure, and solicitation in connection with the Plan, the Disclosure Statement, the Plan Supplements, and all other matters considered by the Bankruptcy Court in connection with this Chapter 11 Case.

**47. Debtor's Solicitation Complied with Bankruptcy Code and Disclosure**

**Statement Order.** Before the Debtor solicited votes on the Plan, the Bankruptcy Court entered the Disclosure Statement Order. In accordance with the Disclosure Statement Order and evidenced by the Affidavits of Service and Publication, the Debtor appropriately served (i) the Solicitation Packages (as defined in the Disclosure Statement Order) on the Holders of Claims in Classes 2, 7, 8 and 9 and Holders of Equity Interests in Classes 10 and 11 who were entitled to vote on the Plan; and (ii) the Notice of Nonvoting Status (as defined in the Disclosure Statement Order) and the



Confirmation Hearing Notice to the Holders of Claims in Classes 1, 3, 4, 5 and 6, who were not entitled to vote on the Plan pursuant to the Disclosure Statement Order. The Disclosure Statement Order approved the contents of the Solicitation Packages provided to Holders of Claims and Equity Interests entitled to vote on the Plan, the notices provided to parties not entitled to vote on the Plan, and the deadlines for voting on and objecting to the Plan. The Debtor and KCC each complied with the content and delivery requirements of the Disclosure Statement Order, thereby satisfying sections 1125(a) and (b) of the Bankruptcy Code, as evidenced by the Affidavits of Service and Publication. The Debtor also satisfied section 1125(c) of the Bankruptcy Code, which provides that the same disclosure statement must be transmitted to each holder of a claim or interest in a particular class. The Debtor caused the same Disclosure Statement to be transmitted to all holders of Claims and Equity Interests entitled to vote on the Plan. The Debtor has complied in all respects with the solicitation requirements of section 1125 of the Bankruptcy Code and the Disclosure Statement Order. The Bankruptcy Court rejects the arguments of the Mr. Dondero and certain Dondero Related Entities that the changes made to certain assumptions and projections from the Liquidation Analysis annexed as Exhibit C to the Disclosure Statement (the “Liquidation Analysis”) to the Amended Liquidation Analysis/Financial Projections require resolicitation of the Plan. The Bankruptcy Court heard credible testimony from Mr. Seery regarding the changes to the Liquidation Analysis as reflected in the Amended Liquidation Analysis/Financial Projections. Based on the record, including the testimony of Mr. Seery, the Bankruptcy Court finds that the changes between the Liquidation Analysis and the Amended Liquidation Analysis/Financial Projections do not constitute materially adverse change to the treatment of Claims or Equity

Interests. Instead, the changes served to update the projected distributions based on Claims that were settled after the approval of the Disclosure Statement and to otherwise incorporate more recent financial data. Such changes were entirely foreseeable given the large amount of unliquidated Claims at the time the Disclosure Statement was approved and the nature of the Debtor's assets. The Bankruptcy Court therefore finds that holders of Claims and Equity Interests were not misled or prejudiced by the Amended Liquidation Analysis/Financial Projections and the Plan does not need to be resolicited.

48. **Plan Proposed in Good Faith and Not by Means Forbidden by Law (11 U.S.C. § 1129(a)(3)).** The Debtor has proposed the Plan in good faith and not by any means forbidden by law, thereby satisfying section 1129(a)(3) of the Bankruptcy Code. In determining that the Plan has been proposed in good faith, the Bankruptcy Court has examined the totality of the circumstances surrounding the filing of this Chapter 11 Case, the Plan itself, and the extensive, un rebutted testimony of Mr. Seery in which he described the process leading to Plan's formulation. Based on the totality of the circumstances and Mr. Seery's testimony, the Bankruptcy Court finds that the Plan is the result of extensive arm's-length negotiations among the Debtor, the Committee, and key stakeholders, and promotes the objectives and purposes of the Bankruptcy Code. Specifically, the Debtor's good faith in proposing the Plan is supported by the following facts adduced by Mr. Seery:

- a. The Independent Board determined that it should consider all potential restructuring alternatives, including pursuit of a traditional restructuring and the continuation of the Debtor's business, a potential sale of the Debtor's assets in one or more transactions, an asset monetization plan similar to that described in the Plan, and a so-called "grand bargain" plan that would involve Mr. Dondero's sponsorship of a plan with a substantial equity infusion.

- b. The Debtor subsequently engaged in arm's-length, good faith negotiations with the Committee over an asset monetization Plan commencing in June 2020, which negotiations occurred over the next several months.
- c. Negotiations between the Debtor and the Committee were often contentious over disputes, including, but not limited to, the post-confirmation corporate governance structure and the scope of releases contemplated by the Plan.
- d. While negotiations with the Committee progressed, the Independent Board engaged in discussions with Mr. Dondero regarding a potential "grand bargain" plan which contemplated a significant equity infusion by Mr. Dondero, and which Mr. Seery personally spent hundreds of hours pursuing over many months.
- e. On August 3, 2020, the Bankruptcy Court entered the *Order Directing Mediation* [Docket No. 912] pursuant to which the Bankruptcy Court ordered the Debtor, the Committee, UBS, Acis, the Redeemer Committee, and Mr. Dondero into mediation. As a result of this mediation, the Debtor negotiated the settlement of the claims of Acis and Mr. Terry, which the Bankruptcy Court approved on October 28, 2020 [Docket No. 1302].
- f. On August 12, 2020, the Debtor filed its *Chapter 11 Plan of Reorganization of Highland Capital Management, L.P.* [Docket No. 944] (the "Initial Plan") and related disclosure statement (the "Initial Disclosure Statement") which were not supported by either the Committee or Mr. Dondero. The Independent Board filed the Initial Plan and Initial Disclosure Statement in order to act as a catalyst for continued discussions with the Committee while it simultaneously worked with Mr. Dondero on the "grand bargain" plan.
- g. The Bankruptcy Court conducted a contested hearing on the Initial Disclosure Statement on October 27, 2020. The Committee and other parties objected to approval of the Disclosure Statement at the Initial Disclosure Statement hearing, which was eventually continued to November 23, 2020.
- h. Following the Initial Disclosure Statement hearing, the Debtor continued to negotiate with the Committee and ultimately resolved the remaining material disputes and led to the Bankruptcy Court's approval of the Disclosure Statement on November 23, 2020.
- i. Even after obtaining the Bankruptcy Court's approval of the Disclosure Statement, the Debtor and the Committee continued to negotiate with Mr. Dondero and the Committee over a potential "pot plan" as an alternative to the Plan on file with the Bankruptcy Court, but such efforts were unsuccessful. This history conclusively demonstrates that the Plan is being proposed in good faith within the meaning of section 1129(a)(3).

49. **Payments for Services or Costs and Expenses (11 U.S.C. § 1129(a)(4)).**

Article II.B of the Plan provides that Professionals will file all final requests for payment of Professional Fee Claims no later than 60 days after the Effective Date, thereby providing an adequate period of time for interested parties to review such claims. The procedures set forth in the Plan for the Bankruptcy Court's approval of the fees, costs, and expenses to be paid in connection with this chapter 11 Case, or in connection with the Plan and incident to this Chapter 11 Case, satisfy the objectives of and are in compliance with section 1129(a)(4) of the Bankruptcy Code.

50. **Directors, Officers, and Insiders (11 U.S.C. § 1129(a)(5)).** Article IV.B

of the Plan provides for the appointment of the Claimant Trustee, Litigation Trustee, and the Claimant Trust Oversight Committee and the members thereto. For the reasons more fully explained in paragraphs 44-45 of this Confirmation Order with respect to the requirement of section 1123(a)(7) of the Bankruptcy Code, the Debtor has disclosed the nature of compensation of any insider to be employed or retained by the Reorganized Debtor, if applicable, and compensation for any such insider. The appointment of such individuals is consistent with the interests of Claims and Equity Interests and with public policy. Thus, the Plan satisfies section 1129(a)(5) of the Bankruptcy Code.

51. **No Rate Changes (11 U.S.C. § 1129(a)(6)).** The Plan does not provide for

any rate change that requires regulatory approval. Section 1129(a)(6) of the Bankruptcy Code is thus not applicable.

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acceleration of term notes owed to the Debtor by the following Dondero Related Entities: NexPoint Advisors, L.P.; Highland Capital Management Services, Inc.; and HCRE Partners, LLC (n/k/a NexPoint Real Estate Partners, LLC). Under the Plan, as of the Confirmation Date, (a) Class 7 General Unsecured Creditors are projected to receive 85% on account of their claims; and (b) Class 8 General Unsecured Creditors are projected to receive at least approximately 71% on account of their Claims. Under a hypothetical chapter 7 liquidation, all general unsecured creditors are projected to receive approximately 55% on account of their Claims. The Bankruptcy Court finds that the distributions that Class 7 and 8 General Unsecured Creditors are projected to receive under the Plan substantially exceeds that which they would receive under a chapter 7 liquidation based on Mr. Seery's testimony, including the following credible reasons he posited, among others:

- a. The nature of the Debtor's assets is complex. Certain assets relate to complicated real estate structures and private equity investments in operating businesses. Mr. Seery's extensive experience with the Debtor during the thirteen months since his appointment as an Independent Director and later Chief Executive Officer and Chief Restructuring Officer, provides him with a substantial learning curve in connection with the disposition of the Debtor's assets and are reasonably expected to result in him being able to realize tens of millions of dollars more value than would a chapter 7 trustee.
- b. Assuming that a hypothetical chapter 7 trustee could even operate the Debtor's business under chapter 7 of the Bankruptcy Code and hire the necessary personnel with the relevant knowledge and experience to assist him or her in selling the Debtor's assets, a chapter 7 trustee would likely seek to dispose of the Debtor's assets in a forced sale liquidation which would generate substantially less value for the Debtor's creditors than the asset monetization plan contemplated by the Plan.
- c. A chapter 7 trustee would be unlikely to retain the Debtor's existing professionals to assist in its efforts to monetize assets, resulting in delays, increased expenses, and reduced asset yields for the chapter 7 estate.

- d. The chapter 7 estate would be unlikely to maximize value as compared to the asset monetization process contemplated by the Plan because potential buyers are likely to perceive a chapter 7 trustee as engaging in a quick, forced “fire sale” of assets; and
- e. The Debtor’s employees, who are vital to its efforts to maximum value and recoveries for stakeholders, may be unwilling to provide services to a chapter 7 trustee.

Finally, there is no evidence to support the objectors’ argument that the Claimant Trust Agreement’s disclaimed liability for ordinary negligence by the Claimant Trustee compared to a chapter 7 trustee’s liability has any relevance to creditor recoveries in a hypothetical chapter 7 liquidation. Thus, section 1129(a)(7) of the Bankruptcy Code is satisfied.

53. **Acceptance by Certain Classes (11 U.S.C. § 1129(a)(8)).** Classes 1, 3, 4, 5 and 6 are Unimpaired under the Plan. Class 2 (Frontier Secured Claim), Class 7 (Convenience Claims), and Class 9 (Subordinated Claims) have each voted to accept the Plan in accordance with the Bankruptcy Code, thereby satisfying section 1129(a)(8) as to those Classes. However, Class 8 (General Unsecured Claims), Class 10 (Class B/C Limited Partnership Interests), and Class 11 (Class A Limited Partnership Interests) have not accepted the Plan. Accordingly, section 1129(a)(8) of the Bankruptcy Code has not been satisfied. The Plan, however, is still confirmable because it satisfies the nonconsensual confirmation provisions of section 1129(b), as set forth below.

54. **Treatment of Administrative, Priority, Priority Tax Claims, and Professional Fee Claims (11 U.S.C. § 1129(a)(9)).** The treatment of Administrative Claims, Priority Claims, and Professional Fee Claims pursuant to Article III of the Plan, and as set forth below with respect to the resolution of the objections filed by the Internal Revenue Service and

certain Texas taxing authorities satisfies the requirements of sections 1129(a)(9) of the Bankruptcy Code.

55. **Acceptance by Impaired Class (11 U.S.C. § 1129(a)(10)).** Class 2 (Frontier Secured Claims) and Class 7 (Convenience Claims) are each Impaired Classes of Claims that voted to accept the Plan, determined without including any acceptance of the Plan by any insider. Therefore, the requirement of section 1129(a)(10) of the Bankruptcy Code is satisfied.

56. **Feasibility (11 U.S.C. § 1129(a)(11)).** Article IV of the Plan provides for the implementation of the Plan through the Claimant Trust, the Litigation Sub-Trust, and the Reorganized Debtor. The Plan provides that the Claimant Trust, among other things, will monetize and distribute the Debtor's remaining assets. The Disclosure Statement, the Amended Liquidation Analysis/Financial Projections, and the other evidence presented at the Confirmation Hearing provide a reasonable probability of success that the Debtor will be able to effectuate the provisions of the Plan. The Plan contemplates the establishment of the Claimant Trust upon the Effective Date, which will monetize the Estate's assets for the benefit of creditors. Mr. Seery testified that the Class 2 Frontier Secured Claim will be paid over time pursuant to the terms of the New Frontier Note and the Reorganized Debtor will have sufficient assets to satisfy its obligations under this note. The Claims of the Holders of Class 7 Claims (as well as those Class 8 creditors who validly opted to receive the treatment of Class 7 Claims) are expected to be satisfied shortly after the Effective Date. Holders of Class 8 Claims (including any holders of Class 7 Claims who opted to receive the treatment provided to Class 8 Claims) are not guaranteed any recovery and will



periodically receive pro rata distributions as assets are monetized pursuant to the Plan and the Claimant Trust Agreement. Thus, section 1129(a)(11) of the Bankruptcy Code is satisfied.

57. **Payment of Fees (11 U.S.C. § 1129(a)(12)).** All fees payable under 28 U.S.C. § 1930 have been paid or will be paid on or before the Effective Date pursuant to Article XII.A of the Plan, thus satisfying the requirement of section 1129(a)(12) of the Bankruptcy Code. The Debtor has agreed that the Reorganized Debtor, the Claimant Trust, and the Litigation Sub-Trust shall be jointly and severally liable for payment of quarterly fees to the Office of the United States Trustee pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1930 through the entry of the Final Decree for the Debtor or the dismissal or conversion of the Chapter 11 Case.

58. **Retiree Benefits.** The Plan provides for the assumption of the Pension Plan (to the extent such Pension Plan provides “retiree benefits” and is governed by section 1114 of the Bankruptcy Code). Thus, the Plan complies with section 1129(a)(13) of the Bankruptcy Code, to the extent applicable.

59. **Miscellaneous Provisions (11 U.S.C. §§ 1129(a)(14)-(16)).** Sections 1129(a)(14)-(16) of the Bankruptcy Code are inapplicable as the Debtor (i) has no domestic support obligations (section 1129(a)(14)), (ii) is not an individual (section 1129(a)(15)), and (iii) is not a nonprofit corporation (section 1129(a)(16)).

60. **No Unfair Discrimination; Fair and Equitable Treatment (11 U.S.C. § 1129(b)).** The classification and treatment of Claims and Equity Interests in Classes 8, 10 and 11, which have not accepted the Plan, is proper pursuant to section 1122 of the Bankruptcy Code, does

not discriminate unfairly, and is fair and equitable pursuant to section 1129(b)(1) of the Bankruptcy Code.

- a. Class 8. The Plan is fair and equitable with respect to Class 8 General Unsecured Claims. While Equity Interests in Class 10 and Class 11 will receive a contingent interest in the Claimant Trust under the Plan (the “Contingent Interests”), the Contingent Interests will not vest unless and until holders of Class 8 General Unsecured Claims and Class 9 Subordinated Claims receive distributions equal to 100% of the amount of their Allowed Claims plus interest as provided under the Plan and Claimant Trust Agreement. Accordingly, as the holders of Equity Interests that are junior to the Claims in Class 8 and Class 9 will not receive or retain under the Plan on account of such junior claim interest any property unless and until the Claims in Class 8 and Class 9 are paid in full plus applicable interest, the Plan is fair and equitable with respect to holders of Class 8 General Unsecured Claims pursuant to section 1129(b)(2)(B) of the Bankruptcy Code and the reasoning of *In re Introgen Therapeutics* 429 B.R 570 (Bankr. W.D. Tex. 2010).
- b. Class 10 and Class 11. There are no Claims or Equity Interests junior to the Equity Interests in Class 10 and Class 11. Equity Interests in Class 10 and 11 will neither receive nor retain any property under the Plan unless Allowed Claims in Class 8 and Class 9 are paid in full plus applicable interest pursuant to the terms of the Plan and Claimant Trust Agreement. Thus, the Plan does not violate the absolute priority rule with respect to Classes 10 and 11 pursuant to Bankruptcy Code section 1129(b)(2)(C). The Plan does not discriminate unfairly as to Equity Interests. As noted above, separate classification of the Class B/C Partnership Interests from the Class A Partnerships Interests is appropriate because they constitute different classes of equity security interests in the Debtor, and each are appropriately separately classified and treated.

Accordingly, the Plan does not violate the absolute priority rule, does not discriminate unfairly, and is fair and equitable with respect to each Class that has rejected the Plan. Thus, the Plan satisfies the requirements of section 1129(b) of the Bankruptcy Code with respect to Classes 8, 10, and 11.

61. **Only One Plan (11 U.S.C. § 1129(c)).** The Plan is the only chapter 11 plan confirmed in this Chapter 11 Case, and the requirements of section 1129(c) of the Bankruptcy Code are therefore satisfied.

62. **Principal Purpose (11 U.S.C. § 1129(d)).** Mr. Seery testified that the principal purpose of the Plan is neither the avoidance of taxes nor the avoidance of the application of section 5 of the Securities Act of 1933, and no governmental unit has objected to the confirmation of the Plan on any such grounds. Accordingly, section 1129(d) of the Bankruptcy Code is inapplicable.

63. **Satisfaction of Confirmation Requirements.** Based upon the foregoing, the Plan satisfies the requirements for confirmation set forth in section 1129 of the Bankruptcy Code and should be confirmed.

64. **Good Faith Solicitation (11 U.S.C. § 1125(e)).** The Debtor, the Independent Directors, and the Debtor's employees, advisors, Professionals, and agents have acted in good faith within the meaning of section 1125(e) of the Bankruptcy Code and in compliance with the applicable provisions of the Bankruptcy Code and Bankruptcy Rules in connection with all of their respective activities relating to the solicitation of acceptances of the Plan and their participation in the activities described in section 1125 of the Bankruptcy Code, and they are entitled to the protections afforded by section 1125(e) of the Bankruptcy Code.

65. **Discharge (11 U.S.C. § 1141(d)(3)).** The Debtor is entitled to a discharge of debts pursuant to section 1141(d)(3)(B) of the Bankruptcy Code. Under the Plan, the Claimant Trust or Reorganized Debtor, as applicable, will continue to manage funds and conduct business

in the same manner as the Debtor did prior to Plan confirmation, which includes the management of the CLOs, Multi-Strat, Restoration Capital, the Select Fund and the Korea Fund. Although the Plan projects that it will take approximately two years to monetize the Debtor's assets for fair value, Mr. Seery testified that while the Reorganized Debtor and Claimant Trust will be monetizing their assets, there is no specified time frame by which this process must conclude. Mr. Seery's credible testimony demonstrates that the Debtor will continue to engage in business after consummation of the Plan, within the meaning of Section 1141(d)(3)(b) and that the Debtor is entitled to a discharge pursuant to section 1141(d)(1) of the Bankruptcy Code.

66. **Retention of Jurisdiction.** The Bankruptcy Court may properly retain jurisdiction over the matters set forth in Article XI of the Plan and/or section 1142 of the Bankruptcy Code to the maximum extent under applicable law.

67. **Additional Plan Provisions (11 U.S.C. § 1123(b)).** The Plan's provisions are appropriate, in the best interests of the Debtor and its Estate, and consistent with the applicable provisions of the Bankruptcy Code, Bankruptcy Rules, and Local Rules.

68. **Executory Contracts and Unexpired Leases (11 U.S.C. § 1123(b)(2)).** The Debtor has exercised reasonable business judgment with respect to the rejection of the Executory Contracts and Unexpired Leases pursuant the terms of the Plan and this Confirmation Order, and such rejections are justified and appropriate in this Chapter 11 Case. The Debtor also filed the List of Assumed Contracts, which contain notices to the applicable counterparties to the contracts set forth on Exhibit "FF" to Plan Supplement filed on February 1, 2021 [Docket No. 1875] and which exhibit sets forth the list of executory contracts and unexpired leases to be

assumed by the Debtor pursuant to the Plan (collectively, the “Assumed Contracts”). With respect to the Assumed Contracts, only one party objected to the assumption of any of the Assumed Contracts, but that objection was withdrawn.<sup>8</sup> Any modifications, amendments, supplements, and restatements to the Assumed Contracts that may have been executed by the Debtor during the Chapter 11 Case shall not be deemed to alter the prepetition nature of the Assumed Contracts or the validity, priority, or amount of any Claims that may arise in connection therewith. Assumption of any Assumed Contract pursuant to the Plan and full payment of any applicable Cure pursuant to the Plan shall result in the full release and satisfaction of any Cures, Claims, or defaults, whether monetary or nonmonetary, including defaults of provisions restricting the change in control or ownership interest composition or other bankruptcy-related defaults, arising under any assumed Executory Contract or Unexpired Lease at any time prior to the effective date of assumption.

69. **Compromises and Settlements Under and in Connection with the Plan (11 U.S.C. § 1123(b)(3)).** All of the settlements and compromises pursuant to and in connection with the Plan, comply with the requirements of section 1123(b)(3) of the Bankruptcy Code and Bankruptcy Rule 9019.

70. **Debtor Release, Exculpation and Injunctions (11 U.S.C. § 1123(b)).** The Debtor Release, Exculpation, and Injunction provisions provided in the Plan (i) are within the jurisdiction of the Bankruptcy Court under 28 U.S.C. § 1334; (ii) are integral elements of the transactions incorporated into the Plan, and inextricably bound with the other provisions of the Plan; (iii) confer material benefit on, and are in the best interests of, the Debtor, its Estate, and its

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<sup>8</sup> See Notice of Withdrawal of James Dondero’s Objection Debtor’s Proposed Assumption of Contracts and Cure Amounts Proposed in Connection Therewith [Docket No. 1876]

creditors; (iv) are fair, equitable, and reasonable; (v) are given and made after due notice and opportunity for hearing; (vi) satisfy the requirements of Bankruptcy Rule 9019; and (vii) are consistent with the Bankruptcy Code and other applicable law, and as set forth below.

71. **Debtor Release.** Section IX.D of the Plan provides for the Debtor’s release of the Debtor’s and Estate’s claims against the Released Parties. Releases by a debtor are discretionary and can be provided by a debtor to persons who have provided consideration to the Debtor and its estate pursuant to section 1123(b)(3)(A) of the Bankruptcy Code. Contrary to the objections raised by Mr. Dondero and certain of the Dondero Related Entities, the Debtor Release is appropriately limited to release claims held by the Debtor and does not purport to release the claims held by the Claimant Trust, Litigation Sub-Trust, or other third parties. The Plan does not purport to release any claims held by third parties and the Bankruptcy Court finds that the Debtor Release is not a “disguised” release of any third party claims as asserted by certain objecting parties. The limited scope of the Debtor Release in the Plan was extensively negotiated with the Committee, particularly with the respect to the Debtor’s conditional release of claims against employees, as identified in the Plan, and the Plan’s conditions and terms of such releases. The Plan does not release (i) any obligations of any party under the Plan or any document, instrument, or agreement executed to implement the Plan, (ii) the rights or obligations of any current employee of the Debtor under any employment agreement or plan, (iii) the rights of the Debtor with respect to any confidentiality provisions or covenants restricting competition in favor of the Debtor under any employment agreement with a current or former employee of the Debtor, (iv) any Avoidance Actions, or (v) any Causes of Action arising from willful misconduct, criminal misconduct, actual

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their direction, the Bankruptcy Court finds and concludes that it has already exculpated these parties for acts other than willful misconduct and gross negligence pursuant to the January 9 Order. The January 9 Order was specifically agreed to by Mr. Dondero, who was in control of the Debtor up until entry of the January 9 Order. The January 9 Order was not appealed. In addition to the appointment of the Independent Directors in an already contentious and litigious case, the January 9 Order set the standard of care for the Independent Directors and specifically exculpated them for negligence. Mr. Seery and Mr. Dubel each testified that they had input into the contents of the January 9 Order and would not have agreed to their appointment as Independent Directors if the January 9 Order did not include the protections set forth in paragraph 10 of the January 9 Order. Paragraph 10 of the January 9 Order (1) requires that parties wishing to sue the Independent Directors or their agents and advisors must first seek approval from the Bankruptcy Court before doing so; (2) sets the standard of care for the Independent Directors during the Chapter 11 Case and exculpated the Independent Directors for acts other than willful misconduct or gross negligence; (3) only permits suits against the Independent Directors to proceed for colorable claims of willful misconduct and gross negligence upon order of the Bankruptcy Court; and (4) does not expire by its terms.

73. **Existing Exculpation of Independent Directors.** The Bankruptcy Court also finds and concludes that it has already exculpated Mr. Seery acting in the capacity as Chief Executive Officer and Chief Restructuring Officer pursuant to the July 16 Order. The Bankruptcy Court concludes its previous approval of the exculpation of the Independent Directors, their agents, advisors and employees working at their direction pursuant to the January 9 Order, and the Chief



Executive Officer and Chief Restructuring Officer pursuant to the July 16 Order constitutes the law of this case and are *res judicata* pursuant to *In re Republic Supply Co. v. Shoaf*, 815 F.2d 1046 (5th Cir.1987). The January 9 Order and July 16 Order cannot be collaterally attacked based on the objectors’ objection to the exculpation of the Independent Directors, their agents, and advisors, including any employees acting at their direction, as well as the Chief Executive Officer and Chief Restructuring Officer, that the Bankruptcy Court already approved pursuant to the January 9 Order and the July 16 Order.

74. **The Exculpation Provision Complies with Applicable Law.** Separate and apart from the *res judicata* effect of the January 9 Order and the July 16 Order, the Bankruptcy Court also finds and concludes that the Exculpation Provision is consistent with applicable law, including *In re Pacific Lumber Co.*, 584 F.3d 229 (5th Cir. 2009), for several reasons:

- a. First, the statutory basis for *Pacific Lumber*’s denial of exculpation for certain parties other than a creditors’ committee and its members is that section 524(e) of the Bankruptcy Code “only releases the debtor, not co-liable third parties.” *Pacific Lumber*, 253 F.3d. at 253. However, *Pacific Lumber* does not prohibit all exculpations under the Bankruptcy Code and the court in such case specifically approved the exculpations of a creditors’ committee and its members on the grounds that “11 U.S.C. § 1103(c), which lists the creditors’ committee’s powers, implies committee members have qualified immunity for actions within the scope of their duties.... [I]f members of the committee can be sued by persons unhappy with the committee’s performance during the case or unhappy with the outcome of the case, it will be extremely difficult to find members to serve on an official committee.” *Pacific Lumber*, 253 F.3d at 253 (quoting Lawrence P. King, et al, Collier on Bankruptcy, ¶ 1103.05[4][b] (15<sup>th</sup> Ed. 2008)). *Pacific Lumber*’s rationale for permitted exculpation of creditors’ committees and their members (which was clearly policy-based and based on a creditors’ committee qualified immunity flowing from their duties under section 1103(c) of the Bankruptcy Code and their disinterestedness and importance in chapter 11 cases) does not preclude exculpation to other parties in a particular chapter 11 case that perform similar roles to a creditors’ committee and its members. The Independent Directors, and by extension the Chief Executive Officer and Chief Restructuring Officer, were not

part of the Debtor’s enterprise prior to their appointment by the Bankruptcy Court under the January 9 Order. The Bankruptcy Court appointed the Independent Directors in lieu of a chapter 11 trustee to address what the Bankruptcy Court perceived as serious conflicts of interest and fiduciary duty concerns with the then-existing management prior to January 9, 2020, as identified by the Committee. In addition, the Bankruptcy Court finds that the Independent Directors expected to be exculpated from claims of negligence, and would likely have been unwilling to serve in contentious cases absent exculpation. The uncontroverted testimony of Mr. Seery and Mr. Dubel demonstrates that the Independent Directors would not have agreed to accept their roles without the exculpation and gatekeeper provision in the January 9 Order. Mr. Dubel also testified as to the increasing important role that independent directors are playing in complex chapter 11 restructurings and that unless independent directors could be assured of exculpation for simple negligence in contentious bankruptcy cases they would be reluctant to accept appointment in chapter 11 cases which would adversely affect the chapter 11 restructuring process. The Bankruptcy Court concludes that the Independent Directors were appointed under the January 9 Order in order to avoid the appointment of a chapter 11 trustee and are analogous to a creditors’ committee rather than an incumbent board of directors. The Bankruptcy Court also concludes that if independent directors cannot be assured of exculpation for simple negligence in contentious bankruptcy cases, they may not be willing to serve in that capacity. Based upon the foregoing, the Bankruptcy Court concludes that *Pacific Lumber’s* policy of exculpating creditors’ committees and their members from “being sued by persons unhappy with the committee’s performance during the case or unhappy with the outcome of the case” is applicable to the Independent Directors in this Chapter 11 Case.<sup>9</sup>

- b. Second, the Bankruptcy Court also concludes that *Pacific Lumber* does not preclude the exculpation of parties if there is a showing that “costs [that] the released parties might incur defending against such suits alleging such negligence are likely to swamp either the Exculpated Parties or the reorganization.” *Pacific Lumber*, 584 F.3d at 252. If ever there was a risk of that happening in a chapter 11 reorganization, it is this one. Mr. Seery credibly testified that Mr. Dondero stated outside the courtroom that if Mr. Dondero’s pot plan does not get approved, that Mr. Dondero will “burn the place down.” The Bankruptcy Court can easily expect that the proposed Exculpated Parties might expect to incur costs that could swamp them and the reorganization based on the prior litigious conduct of Mr. Dondero and his controlled entities that justify their inclusion in the Exculpation Provision.

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<sup>9</sup> The same reasoning applies to the inclusion of Strand in the Exculpation Provision because Strand is the general partner of the Debtor through which each of the Independent Board members act.

75. **Injunction.** Section IX.D of the Plan provides for a Plan injunction to implement and enforce the Plan’s release, discharge and release provisions (the “Injunction Provision”). The Injunction Provision is necessary to implement the provisions in the Plan. Mr. Seery testified that the Claimant Trustee will monetize the Debtor’s assets in order to maximize their value. In order to accomplish this goal, the Claimant Trustee needs to be able to pursue this objective without the interference and harassment of Mr. Dondero and his related entities, including the Dondero Related Entities. Mr. Seery also testified that if the Claimant Trust was subject to interference by Mr. Dondero, it would take additional time to monetize the Debtor’s assets and those assets could be monetized for less money to the detriment of the Debtor’s creditors. The Bankruptcy Court finds and concludes that the Injunction Provision is consistent with and permissible under Bankruptcy Code sections 1123(a), 1123(a)(6), 1141(a) and (c), and 1142. The Bankruptcy Court rejects assertions by certain objecting parties that the Injunction Provision constitutes a “third-party release.” The Injunction Provision is appropriate under the circumstances of this Chapter 11 Case and complies with applicable bankruptcy law. The Bankruptcy Court also concludes that the terms “implementation” and “consummation” are neither vague nor ambiguous

76. **Gatekeeper Provision.** Section IX.F of the Plan contains a provision contained in paragraph AA of this Confirmation Order and which the Debtor has referred to as a gatekeeper provision (the “Gatekeeper Provision”). The Gatekeeper Provision requires that Enjoined Parties first seek approval of the Bankruptcy Court before they may commence an action against Protected Parties. Thereafter, if the Bankruptcy Court determines that the action is

colorable, the Bankruptcy Court may, if it has jurisdiction, adjudicate the action. The Bankruptcy Court finds that the inclusion of the Gatekeeper Provision is critical to the effective and efficient administration, implementation, and consummation of the Plan. The Bankruptcy Court also concludes that the Bankruptcy Court has the statutory authority as set forth below to approve the Gatekeeper Provision.

77. **Factual Support for Gatekeeper Provision.** The facts supporting the need for the Gatekeeper Provision are as follows. As discussed earlier in this Confirmation Order, prior to the commencement of the Debtor's bankruptcy case, and while under the direction of Mr. Dondero, the Debtor had been involved in a myriad of litigation, some of which had gone on for years and, in some cases, over a decade. Substantially all of the creditors in this case are either parties who were engaged in litigation with the Debtor, parties who represented the Debtor in connection with such litigation and had not been paid, or trade creditors who provided litigation-related services to the Debtor. During the last several months, Mr. Dondero and the Dondero Related Entities have harassed the Debtor, which has resulted in further substantial, costly, and time-consuming litigation for the Debtor. Such litigation includes: (i) entry of a temporary restraining order and preliminary injunction against Mr. Dondero [Adv. Proc. No. 20-03190 Docket No. 10 and 59] because of, among other things, his harassment of Mr. Seery and employees and interference with the Debtor's business operations; (ii) a contempt motion against Mr. Dondero for violation of the temporary restraining order, which motion is still pending before the Bankruptcy Court [Adv. Proc. No. 20-03190 Docket No. 48]; (iii) a motion by Mr. Dondero's controlled investors in certain CLOs managed by the Debtor that the Bankruptcy Court referred to

as frivolous and a waste of the Bankruptcy Court’s time [Docket No. 1528] which was denied by the Court [Docket No. 1605]; (iv) multiple plan confirmation objections focused on ensuring the Dondero Related Entities be able to continue their litigation against the Debtor and its successors post-confirmation [Docket Nos. 1661, 1667, 1670, 1673, 1676, 1677 and 1868]; (v) objections to the approval of the Debtor’s settlements with Acis and HarbourVest and subsequent appeals of the Bankruptcy Court’s order approving each of those settlements [Docket Nos. 1347 and 1870]; and (vi) a complaint and injunction sought against Mr. Dondero’s affiliated entities to prevent them from violating the January 9 Order and entry of a restraining order against those entities [Adv Proc. No. 21-03000 Docket No 1] (collectively, the “Dondero Post-Petition Litigation”).

78. **Findings Regarding Dondero Post-Petition Litigation.** The Bankruptcy Court finds that the Dondero Post-Petition Litigation was a result of Mr. Dondero failing to obtain creditor support for his plan proposal and consistent with his comments, as set forth in Mr. Seery’s credible testimony, that if Mr. Dondero’s plan proposal was not accepted, he would “burn down the place.” The Bankruptcy Court concludes that without appropriate protections in place, in the form of the Gatekeeper Provision, Mr. Dondero and his related entities will likely commence litigation against the Protected Parties after the Effective Date and do so in jurisdictions other than the Bankruptcy Court in an effort to obtain a forum which Mr. Dondero perceives will be more hospitable to his claims. The Bankruptcy Court also finds, based upon Mr. Seery’s testimony, that the threat of continued litigation by Mr. Dondero and his related entities after the Effective Date will impede efforts by the Claimant Trust to monetize assets for the benefit of creditors and result

in lower distributions to creditors because of costs and distraction such litigation or the threats of such litigation would cause.

79. **Necessity of Gatekeeper Provision.** The Bankruptcy Court further finds that unless the Bankruptcy Court approves the Gatekeeper Provision, the Claimant Trustee and the Claimant Trust Oversight Board will not be able to obtain D&O insurance, the absence of which will present unacceptable risks to parties currently willing to serve in such roles. The Bankruptcy Court heard testimony from Mark Tauber, a Vice President with AON Financial Services, the Debtor’s insurance broker (“AON”), regarding his efforts to obtain D&O insurance. Mr. Tauber credibly testified that of all the insurance carriers that AON approached to provide D&O insurance coverage after the Effective Date, the only one willing to do so without an exclusion for claims asserted by Mr. Dondero and his affiliates otherwise requires that this Order approve the Gatekeeper Provision. Based on the foregoing, the Bankruptcy Court finds that the Gatekeeper Provision is necessary and appropriate in light of the history of the continued litigiousness of Mr. Dondero and his related entities in this Chapter 11 Case and necessary to the effective and efficient administration, implementation and consummation of the Plan and is appropriate pursuant to *Carroll v. Abide (In re Carroll)* 850 F.3d 811 (5th Cir. 2017). Approval of the Gatekeeper Provision will prevent baseless litigation designed merely to harass the post-confirmation entities charged with monetizing the Debtor’s assets for the benefit of its economic constituents, will avoid abuse of the court system and preempt the use of judicial time that properly could be used to consider the meritorious claims of other litigants. Any suit against a Protected Party would effectively be a suit against the Debtor, and the Debtor may be required to indemnify the Protected





a claim is colorable, which the Bankruptcy Court has jurisdiction to determine, is distinct from whether the Bankruptcy Court would have jurisdiction to adjudicate any claim it finds colorable.

82. **Resolution of Objections of Scott Ellington and Isaac Leventon.** Each of Scott Ellington (“Mr. Ellington”) and Isaac Leventon (“Mr. Leventon”) (each, a “Senior Employee Claimant”) has asserted certain claims for liquidated but unpaid bonus amounts for the following periods: 2016, 2017, and 2018, as set forth in Exhibit A to that certain *Senior Employees’ Limited Objection to Debtor’s Fifth Amended Plan of Reorganization* [Docket No. 1669] (the “Senior Employees’ Objection”) (for each of Mr. Ellington and Mr. Leventon, the “Liquidated Bonus Claims”).

- a. Mr. Ellington has asserted Liquidated Bonus Claims in the aggregate amount of \$1,367,197.00, and Mr. Leventon has asserted Liquidated Bonus Claims in the aggregate amount of \$598,198.00. Mr. Ellington received two Ballots<sup>10</sup> – a Ballot for Class 7 of the Plan and a Ballot for Class 8 of the Plan. Mr. Ellington completed and timely returned both of such Ballots, voted to reject the Plan, and elected to have his Class 8 Liquidated Bonus Claims treated under Class 7 of the Plan, subject to the objections and reservations of rights set forth in the Senior Employees’ Objection. If Mr. Ellington is permitted to elect Class 7 treatment for his Liquidated Bonus Claims, then the maximum amount of his Liquidated Bonus Claims will be \$1,000,000.
- b. Mr. Leventon received two Ballots—a Ballot for Class 7 of the Plan and a Ballot for Class 8 of the Plan. Mr. Leventon completed and timely returned both of such Ballots and voted each such Ballots to rejected the Plan.
- c. The Senior Employees’ Objection, among other things, objects to the Plan on the grounds that the Debtor improperly disputes the right of Mr. Ellington to elect Class 7 treatment for his Liquidated Bonus Claims and Mr. Leventon’s entitlement to receive Class 7 Convenience Class treatment for his Liquidated Bonus Claims. The Debtor contended that neither Mr. Ellington or Mr. Leventon were entitled to elect to receive Class 7 Convenience Class treatment on account of their Liquidated

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<sup>10</sup> As defined in the Plan, “Ballot” means the forms(s) distributed to holders of Impaired Claims or Equity Interests entitled to vote on the Plan on which to indicate their acceptance or rejection of the Plan.



Bonus Claims under the terms of the Plan, the Disclosure Statement Order or applicable law.

- d. The Debtor and Mr. Ellington and Mr. Leventon negotiated at arms' length in an effort to resolve all issues raised in the Senior Employee's Objection, including whether or not Mr. Ellington and Mr. Leventon were entitled to Class 7 Convenience Class treatment of their Liquidated Bonus Claims. As a result of such negotiation, the Debtor, Mr. Ellington, and Mr. Leventon have agreed to the settlement described in paragraphs 82(e) through 82(k) below and approved and effectuated pursuant to decretal paragraphs RR through SS (the "Senior Employees' Settlement").
- e. Under the terms of the Senior Employees' Settlement, the Debtor has the right to elect one of two treatments of the Liquidated Bonus Claims for a Senior Employee Claimant. Under the first treatment option ("Option A"), the Liquidated Bonus Claims will be entitled to be treated in Class 7 of the Plan, and the Liquidated Bonus Claims will be entitled to receive payment in an amount equal to 70.125% of the Class 7 amount of the Liquidated Bonus Claims, subject to the Liquidated Bonus Claims becoming Allowed Claims under the terms of the Plan. Under this calculation, Mr. Ellington would be entitled to receive \$701,250.00 on account of his Class 7 Convenience Class Claim when and as Allowed under the Plan, and Mr. Leventon would be entitled to receive \$413,175.10 on account of his Class 7 Convenience Class Claim when and as Allowed under the Plan. If, however, any party in interest objects to the allowance of the Senior Employee Claimant's Liquidated Bonus Claims and does not prevail in such objection, then such Senior Employee Claimant will be entitled to a payment in an amount equal to 85% of his Allowed Liquidated Bonus Claims (subject, in the case of Mr. Ellington, to the cap imposed on Class 7 Claims). In addition, under Option A, each of Mr. Ellington and Mr. Leventon would retain their respective rights to assert that the Liquidated Bonus Claims are entitled to be treated as Administrative Expense Claims, as defined in Article I.B.2. of the Plan, in which case the holder of such Liquidated Bonus Claims would be entitled to payment in full of the Allowed Liquidated Bonus Claims. Under Option A, parties in interest would retain the right to object to any motion seeking payment of the Liquidated Bonus Amounts as Administrative Expenses.
- f. Under the second treatment option ("Option B"), the Debtor would agree that the Senior Employee Claimant has Allowed Liquidated Bonus Claims, no longer subject to objection by any party in interest, in the amounts of the Liquidated Bonus Claims (subject, in the case of Mr. Ellington, to the cap imposed by Class 7). If the Debtor elects Option B as to a Senior Employee Claimant, then such Senior Employee Claimant would be entitled to a payment on account of his Allowed Liquidated Bonus Claims in an amount equal to 60% of the amount of the

Liquidated Bonus Claims (which, in Mr. Ellington's case, would be \$600,000 and in Mr. Leventon's case, would be \$358,918.80), and such payment would be the sole recovery on account of such Allowed Liquidated Bonus Claims.

- g. The Debtor may, with the consent of the Committee, elect Option B with respect to a Senior Employee Claimant at any time prior to the occurrence of the Effective Date. If the Debtor does not make an election, then Option A will apply.
- h. Under either Option A or Option B, Mr. Ellington and Mr. Leventon will retain all their rights with respect to all Claims other than the Liquidated Bonus Amounts, including, but not limited to, their Class 6 PTO Claims, other claims asserted as Class 8 General Unsecured Claims, the Senior Employees' claims for indemnification against the Debtor, and any other claims that they may assert constitute Administrative Expense Claims, and any other such Claims are subject to the rights of any party in interest to object to such Claims, and the Debtor reserves any all of its rights and defenses in connection therewith.
- i. Subject to entry of this Confirmation Order and as set forth and announced on the record at the hearing on confirmation of the Plan and no party objecting thereto, Mr. Ellington and Mr. Leventon agreed to change the votes in their respective Ballots from rejection to acceptance of the Plan and to withdraw the Senior Employees' Objection.
- j. The Senior Employees' Settlement represents a valid exercise of the Debtor's business judgment and satisfies the requirements for a compromise under Bankruptcy Rule 9019(a).
- k. For the avoidance of doubt, neither Mr. Leventon nor Mr. Ellington shall be a Released Party under the Plan regardless of how the Senior Employee Claimants' Claims are to be treated hereunder.

Based upon the foregoing findings, and upon the record made before the Bankruptcy Court at the Confirmation Hearing, and good and sufficient cause appearing therefor, it is hereby

**ORDERED, ADJUDGED AND DECREED THAT:**

**A. Confirmation of the Plan.** The Plan is approved in its entirety and **CONFIRMED** under section 1129 of the Bankruptcy Code. The terms of the Plan, including the

Plan Supplements and Plan Modifications, are incorporated by reference into and are an integral part of this Confirmation Order.<sup>11</sup>

**B. Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law.** The findings of fact and the conclusions of law set forth in this Confirmation Order and on the record of the Confirmation Hearing constitute findings of fact and conclusions of law in accordance with Bankruptcy Rule 7052, made applicable to this proceeding by Bankruptcy Rule 9014. All findings of fact and conclusion of law announced by the Bankruptcy Court at the Confirmation Hearing in relation to confirmation of the Plan are hereby incorporated into this Confirmation Order. To the extent that any of the following constitutes findings of fact or conclusions of law, they are adopted as such. To the extent any findings of fact or conclusions of law set forth in this Confirmation Order (including any findings of fact or conclusions of law announced by the Bankruptcy Court at the Confirmation Hearing and incorporated herein) constitutes an order of the Bankruptcy Court, and is adopted as such.

**C. Objections.** Any resolution or disposition of objections to confirmation of the Plan or otherwise ruled upon by the Bankruptcy Court on the record of the Confirmation Hearing is hereby incorporated by reference. All objections and all reservations of rights pertaining to confirmation of the Plan that have not been withdrawn, waived or settled are overruled on the merits, except as otherwise specifically provided in this Confirmation Order.

**D. Plan Supplements and Plan Modifications.** The filing with the Bankruptcy Court of the Plan Supplements and the Plan Modifications constitutes due and

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<sup>11</sup> The Plan is attached hereto as Exhibit A.

sufficient notice thereof. Accordingly, pursuant to section 1127(a) of the Bankruptcy Code and Bankruptcy Rule 3019, the Plan Modifications and the Plan Supplements do not require additional disclosure under section 1125 of the Bankruptcy Code or resolicitation of votes under section 1126 of the Bankruptcy Code, nor do they require that Holders of Claims or Equity Interests be afforded an opportunity to change previously cast acceptances or rejections of the Plan. The Plan Modifications and the Plan Supplements constitute the Plan pursuant to section 1127(a) of the Bankruptcy Code. Accordingly, the Plan, as modified, is properly before the Bankruptcy Court and all votes cast with respect to the Plan prior to such modification shall be binding and shall apply with respect to the Plan.

**E. Deemed Acceptance of Plan.** In accordance with section 1127 of the Bankruptcy Code and Bankruptcy Rule 3019, all Holders of Claims and Equity Interests who voted to accept the Plan (or whom are conclusively presumed to accept the Plan) are deemed to have accepted the Plan as modified by the Plan Modifications. No holder of a Claim shall be permitted to change its vote as a consequence of the Plan Modifications.

**F. Vesting of Assets in the Reorganized Debtor.** Except as otherwise provided in the Plan or this Confirmation Order, on or after the Effective Date, all Reorganized Debtor Assets will vest in the Reorganized Debtor, free and clear of all Liens, Claims, charges or other encumbrances pursuant to section 1141(c) of the Bankruptcy Code, except with respect to such Liens, Claims, charges, and other encumbrances that are specifically preserved under the Plan upon the Effective Date. The Reorganized Debtor shall be the exclusive trustee of the Reorganized Debtor Assets for purposes of 31 U.S.C. § 3713(b) and 26 U.S.C. § 6012(b)(3), as well as the

representative of the Estate appointed pursuant to section 1123(b)(3)(B) of the Bankruptcy Code with respect to the Reorganized Debtor Assets.

**G. Effectiveness of All Actions.** All actions contemplated by the Plan, including all actions in connection with the Claimant Trust Agreement, the Senior Employee Stipulation, the New GP LLC Documents, the New Frontier Note, the Reorganized Limited Partnership Agreement, the Litigation Sub-Trust Agreement, and the other Plan Documents, are authorized to be taken on, prior to, or after the Effective Date, as applicable, under this Confirmation Order, without further application to or order of the Bankruptcy Court, or further action by the directors, managers, officers or partners of the Debtor or the Reorganized Debtor and with the effect that such actions had been taken by unanimous action of such parties.

**H. Restructuring Transactions.** The Debtor or Reorganized Debtor, as applicable, are authorized to enter into and effectuate the Restructuring provided under the Plan, including, without limitation, the entry into and consummation of the transactions contemplated by the Claimant Trust Agreement, the Senior Employee Stipulation, the New GP LLC Documents, the New Frontier Note, the Reorganized Limited Partnership Agreement, the Litigation Sub-Trust Agreement, and the other Plan Documents, and may take any actions as may be necessary or appropriate to effect a corporate restructuring of its business or a corporate restructuring of the overall corporate structure of the Reorganized Debtor, as and to the extent provided in the Plan. Any transfers of assets or equity interests effected or any obligations incurred through the Restructuring pursuant to the Plan are hereby approved and shall not constitute fraudulent conveyances or fraudulent transfers or otherwise be subject to avoidance.

**I. Preservation of Causes of Action.** Unless a Cause of Action against a Holder of a Claim or an Equity Interest or other Entity is expressly waived, relinquished, released, compromised or settled in the Plan or any Final Order (including, without limitation, this Confirmation Order), such Cause of Action is expressly reserved for later adjudication by the Reorganized Debtor, the Litigation Sub-Trust, or the Claimant Trust, as applicable (including, without limitation, Causes of Action not specifically identified or of which the Debtor may presently be unaware or that may arise or exist by reason of additional facts or circumstances unknown to the Debtor at this time or facts or circumstances that may change or be different from those the Debtor now believes to exist) and, therefore, no preclusion doctrine, including, without limitation, the doctrines of *res judicata*, collateral estoppel, issue preclusion, claim preclusion, waiver, estoppel (judicial, equitable or otherwise) or laches will apply to such Causes of Action as a consequence of the confirmation, effectiveness, or consummation of the Plan based on the Disclosure Statement, the Plan, or this Confirmation Order, except where such Causes of Action have been expressly released in the Plan or any other Final Order (including, without limitation, this Confirmation Order). In addition, the right of the Reorganized Debtor, the Claimant Trust, or the Litigation Sub-Trust to pursue or adopt any claims alleged in any lawsuit in which the Debtor is a plaintiff, defendant or an interested party, against any Entity, including, without limitation, the plaintiffs or co-defendants in such lawsuits, is expressly reserved.

**J. Independent Board of Directors of Strand.** The terms of the current Independent Directors shall expire on the Effective Date without the need for any further or other action by any of the Independent Directors. For avoidance of doubt, the Assumed Contracts

include the *Indemnification and Guaranty Agreement between Highland Capital Management, Strand Advisors, Inc. and James Seery*; the *Indemnification and Guaranty Agreement between Highland Capital Management, Strand Advisors, Inc. and John Dubel* and *Indemnification and Guaranty Agreement between Highland Capital Management, Strand Advisors, Inc. and Russell Nelms* and shall each remain in full force and effect notwithstanding the expiration of the terms of any Independent Directors.

**K. Cancellation of Equity Interests and Issuance of New Partnership**

**Interests.** On the Effective Date, all Class A Limited Partnership Interests, including the Class A Limited Partnership Interests held by Strand, as general partner, and Class B/C Limited Partnerships in the Debtor will be deemed cancelled, and all obligations or debts owed by, or Claims against, the Debtor on account of, or based upon, such Class A Limited Partnership Interests and Class B/C Limited Partnership Interests shall be deemed as cancelled, released, and discharged, including all obligations or duties by the Debtor relating to the Equity Interests in any of the Debtor's formation documents, including the Limited Partnership Agreement. As of the Effective Date and pursuant to the Plan, new Class A Limited Partnership Interests in the Reorganized Debtor will be issued to the Claimant Trust and New GP LLC. The Claimant Trust, as limited partner, will ratify New GP LLC's appointment as general partner of the Reorganized Debtor, and on and following the Effective Date, the Claimant Trust will be the Reorganized Debtor's limited partner and New GP LLC will be its general partner. The Claimant Trust, as limited partner, and New GP LLC, as general partner, will execute the Reorganized Limited Partnership Agreement, which will amend and restate, in all respects, the Debtor's current Limited



Partnership Agreement. Following the Effective Date, the Reorganized Debtor will be managed consistent with the terms of the Reorganized Limited Partnership Agreement by New GP LLC. The sole managing member of New GP LLC will be the Claimant Trust, and the Claimant Trustee will be the sole officer of New GP LLC on the Effective Date.

**L. Transfer of Assets to Claimant Trust.** On or prior to the Effective Date, the Debtor shall irrevocably transfer and shall be deemed to have irrevocably transferred to the Claimant Trust all of its rights, title, and interest in and to all of the Claimant Trust Assets, and in accordance with section 1141 of the Bankruptcy Code, the Claimant Trust Assets shall automatically vest in the Claimant Trust free and clear of all Claims, Liens, encumbrances, or interests subject only to the Claimant Trust Interests and the Claimant Trust Expenses, as provided for in the Claimant Trust Agreement, and such transfer shall be exempt from any stamp, real estate transfer, mortgage from any stamp, transfer, reporting, sales, use, or other similar tax. Following the Effective Date, the Claimant Trust will administer the Claimant Trust Assets pursuant to the Plan and the Claimant Trust Agreement.

**M. Transfer of Estate Claims to Litigation Sub-Trust.** On or prior to the Effective Date, the Claimant Trust shall irrevocably transfer and shall be deemed to have irrevocably transferred to the Litigation Sub-Trust all of the Claimant Trust's rights, title, and interest in and to all of the Estate Claims as successor in interest to the Debtor, and in accordance with section 1141 of the Bankruptcy Code, the Estate Claims shall automatically vest in the Litigation Sub-Trust free and clear of all Claims, Liens, encumbrances, or interests subject only to the Litigation Sub-Trust Interests and Litigation Sub-Trust Expenses. The Litigation Trustee will







Issuer Executory Contracts (collectively, the “Portfolio Manager”) will pay to the Issuers<sup>12</sup> a cumulative amount of \$525,000 (the “Cure Amount”) as follows:

- a. \$200,000 in cash on the date that is five business days from the Effective Date, with such payment paid directly to Schulte Roth & Zabel LLP (“SRZ”) in the amount of \$85,714.29, Jones Walker LLP (“JW”) in the amount of \$72,380.95, and Maples Group (“Maples”) and collectively with SRZ and JW, the “Issuers’ Counsel”) in the amount of \$41,904.76 as reimbursement for the attorney’s fees and other legal expenses incurred by the Issuers in connection with the Debtor’s bankruptcy case; and
- b. \$325,000 in four equal quarterly payments of \$81,250.00 (each, a “Payment”), which amounts shall be paid to SRZ in the amount of \$34,821.43, JW in the amount of \$29,404.76, and Maples in the amount of \$17,023.81 as additional reimbursement for the attorney’s fees and other legal expenses incurred by the Issuers in connection with the Debtor’s bankruptcy case (i) from any management fees actually paid to the Portfolio Manager under the Issuer Executory Contracts (the “Management Fees”), and (ii) on the date(s) Management Fees are required to be paid under the Issuer Executory Contracts (the “Payment Dates”), and such obligation shall be considered an irrevocable direction from the Debtor and the Bankruptcy Court to the relevant CLO Trustee to pay, on each Payment Date, the Payment to Issuers’ Counsel, allocated in the proportion set forth in such agreement; *provided, however*, that (x) if the Management Fees are insufficient to make any Payment in full on a Payment Date, such shortfall, in addition to any other amounts due hereunder, shall be paid out of the Management Fees owed on the following Payment Date, and (y) nothing herein shall limit either Debtor’s liability to pay the amounts set forth herein, nor the recourse of the Issuers or Issuers’ Counsel to the Debtor, in the event of any failure to make any Payment.

**S. Release of Issuer Claims.** Effective as of the Confirmation Date, and to the maximum extent permitted by law, each Issuer on behalf of itself and each of its current and former advisors, trustees, directors, officers, managers, members, partners, employees, beneficiaries, shareholders, agents, participants, subsidiaries, parents, successors, designees, and

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<sup>12</sup> The “Issuers” are: Brentwood CLO, Ltd., Gleneagles CLO, Ltd., Greenbriar CLO, Ltd., Highland CLO 2018-1, Ltd., Highland Legacy Limited, Highland Loan Funding V Ltd., Highland Park CDO I, Ltd., Pam Capital Funding LP, Rockwall CDO II Ltd., Rockwall CDO Ltd., Southfork CLO Ltd., Stratford CLO Ltd., Westchester CLO, Ltd., Aberdeen Loan Funding, Ltd., Eastland CLO, Ltd., Grayson CLO, Ltd., Highland Credit Opportunities CDO Ltd., Jasper CLO, Ltd., Liberty Cayman Holdings, Ltd., Liberty CLO, Ltd., Red River CLO, Ltd., Valhalla CLO, Ltd.

**T. Release of Debtor Claims against Issuer Released Parties.** Upon entry of this Order, and to the maximum extent permitted by law, the Debtor hereby forever, finally, fully, unconditionally, and completely releases, relieves, acquits, remises, and exonerates, and covenants never to sue [(i) each Issuer and (ii) Wendy Ebanks, (iii) Yun Zheng, (iv) Laura Chisholm, (v) Mora Goddard, (vi) Stacy Bodden, (vii) Suzan Merren (viii) Scott Dakers, (ix) Samit Ghosh, (x) Inderjit Singh, (xi) Ellen Christian, (xii) Andrew Dean, (xiii) Betsy Mortel, (xiv) David Hogan, (xv) Cleveland Stewart, (xvi) Rachael Rankin, (xvii) Otelia Scott, (xviii) Martin Couch, (xx) Feron Bartley-Davis, (xxi) Charlotte Cloete, (xxii) Christina McLean, (xxiii) Karen Ellerbe,

**U. Authorization to Consummate.** The Debtor is authorized to consummate the Plan after the entry of this Confirmation Order subject to satisfaction or waiver of the conditions precedent to the Effective Date of the Plan set forth in Article VIII.A of the Plan. The Plan shall not become effective unless and until the conditions set forth in Article VIII.A of the Plan have been satisfied, or otherwise waived pursuant to Article VIII.B of the Plan.

**V. Professional Compensation.** All requests for payment of Professional Fee Claims for services rendered and reimbursement of expenses incurred prior to the Effective Date

**W. Release, Exculpation, Discharge, and Injunction Provisions. The following release, exculpation, discharge, and injunction provisions set forth in the Plan are approved and authorized in their entirety, and such provisions are effective and binding on all parties and Entities to the extent provided therein.**

**X. Discharge of Claims and Termination of Interests.** To the fullest extent provided under section 1141(d)(1)(A) and other applicable provisions of the Bankruptcy Code, except as otherwise expressly provided by the Plan or this Confirmation Order, all consideration distributed under the Plan will be in exchange for, and in complete satisfaction, settlement,

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*provided, however*, the foregoing will not apply to (a) any acts or omissions of an Exculpated Party arising out of or related to acts or omissions that constitute bad faith, fraud, gross negligence, criminal misconduct, or willful misconduct or (b) Strand or any Employee other than with respect to actions taken by such Entities from the date of appointment of the Independent Directors through the Effective Date. The Plan's exculpation shall be in addition to, and not in limitation of, all other releases, indemnities, exculpations, any other applicable law or rules, or any other provisions of the Plan, including Article IV.C.2 of the Plan, protecting such Exculpated Parties from liability.

**Z. Releases by the Debtor.** On and after the Effective Date, each Released Party is deemed to be, hereby conclusively, absolutely, unconditionally, irrevocably, and forever released and discharged by the Debtor and the Estate, in each case on behalf of themselves and their respective successors, assigns, and representatives, including, but not limited to, the Claimant Trust and the Litigation Sub-Trust from any and all Causes of Action, including any derivative claims, asserted on behalf of the Debtor, whether known or unknown, foreseen or unforeseen, matured or unmatured, existing or hereafter arising, in law, equity, contract, tort or otherwise, that the Debtor or the Estate would have been legally entitled to assert in their own right (whether individually or collectively) or on behalf of the holder of any Claim against, or Interest in, a Debtor or other Person. Notwithstanding anything contained herein to the contrary, the foregoing release does not release: (i) any obligations of any party under the Plan or any document, instrument, or agreement executed to implement the Plan, (ii) the rights or obligations of any current employee of the Debtor under any employment agreement or plan, (iii) the rights of the Debtor with respect to any confidentiality provisions or covenants restricting competition in favor of the Debtor under



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Article XI of the Plan, shall have jurisdiction to adjudicate the underlying colorable claim or cause of action.

**BB. Duration of Injunction and Stays.** Unless otherwise provided in the Plan, in this Confirmation Order, or in a Final Order of the Bankruptcy Court, (i) all injunctions and stays entered during the Chapter 11 Case and in existence on the Confirmation Date, shall remain in full force and effect in accordance with their terms; and (ii) the automatic stay arising under section 362 of the Bankruptcy Code shall remain in full force and effect subject to Section 362(c) of the Bankruptcy Code, and to the extent necessary if the Debtor does not receive a discharge, the Bankruptcy Court will enter an equivalent order under Section 105.

**CC. Continuance of January 9 Order and July 16 Order.** Unless otherwise provided in the Plan, in this Confirmation Order, or in a Final Order of the Bankruptcy Court, each of the *Order Approving Settlement with Official Committee of Unsecured Creditors Regarding Governance of the Debtor and Procedures for Operations in the Ordinary Course*, entered by the Bankruptcy Court on January 9, 2020 [Docket No. 339] and *Order Approving the Debtor's Motion Under Bankruptcy Code Sections 105(a) and 363(b) Authorizing Retention of James P. Seery, Jr., as Chief Executive Officer, Chief Restructuring Officer, and Foreign Representative Nunc Pro Tunc to March 15, 2020* [Docket No. 854] entered on July 16, 2020 shall remain in full force and effect from the Confirmation Date and following the Effective Date.

**DD. No Governmental Releases.** Nothing in this Confirmation Order or the Plan shall effect a release of any claim by the United States Government or any of its agencies or

**EE. Exemption from Transfer Taxes.** Pursuant to section 1146(a) of the Bankruptcy Code, any transfers (whether from the Debtor to the Reorganized Debtor or to any other Person) of property under the Plan or pursuant to: (a) the issuance, distribution, transfer, or exchange of any debt, equity security, or other interest in the Debtor or the Reorganized Debtor; (b) the Restructuring transactions pursuant to the Plan; (c) the creation, modification, consolidation, termination, refinancing, and/or recording of any mortgage, deed of trust, or other security interest, or the securing of additional indebtedness by such or other means; (d) the making, assignment, or recording of any lease or sublease; or (e) the making, delivery, or recording of any deed or other instrument of transfer under, in furtherance of, or in connection with, the Plan,

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**LL. Substantial Consummation.** On the Effective Date, the Plan shall be deemed to be substantially consummated under sections 1101 and 1127 of the Bankruptcy Code.

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applicable nonbankruptcy law. In the event the 2020 taxes are paid after February 1, 2021, the Tax Authorities may assert any rights and amounts they claim are owed with respect to penalties and interest that have accrued through the date of payment and the Debtor and Reorganized Debtor reserve any all rights and defenses in connection therewith.

- a. The Debtor/Reorganized Debtor shall pay all amounts owed to the Tax Authorities for tax year 2021 in accordance with and to the extent required under applicable nonbankruptcy law. The Tax Authorities shall not be required to file and serve an administrative expense claim and request for payment as a condition of allowance of their administrative expense claims pursuant to 11 U.S.C. Section 503(b)(1)(D). With regard to year 2019 ad valorem property taxes, the Tax Authorities will receive payment of their prepetition claims within 30 days of the Effective Date of the Plan. The payment will include interest from the Petition Date through the Effective Date and from the Effective Date through payment in full at the state statutory rate pursuant to 11 U.S.C. Sections 506(b), 511, and 1129, if applicable, subject to all of the Debtor's and Reorganized Debtor's rights and defenses in connection therewith. Notwithstanding any other provision in the Plan, the Tax Authorities shall (i) retain the liens that secure all prepetition and postpetition amounts ultimately owed to them, if any, as well as (ii) the state law priority of those liens until the claims are paid in full.
- b. The Tax Authorities' prepetition claims and their administrative expense claims shall not be discharged until such time as the amounts owed are paid in full. In the event of a default asserted by the Taxing Authorities, the Tax Authorities shall provide notice Debtor or Reorganized Debtor, as applicable, and may demand cure of any such asserted default. Subject to all of its rights and defenses, the Debtor or Reorganized Debtor shall have fifteen (15) days from the date of the notice to cure the default. If the alleged default is not cured, the Tax Authorities may exercise any of their respective rights under applicable law and pursue collection of all amounts owed pursuant to state law outside of the Bankruptcy Court, subject in all respects to the Debtor's and Reorganized Debtor's applicable rights and defenses. The Debtor/Reorganized Debtor shall be entitled to any notices of default required under applicable nonbankruptcy law and each of the Taxing Authorities, the Debtor and the Reorganized Debtor reserve any and all of their respective rights and defenses in connection therewith. The Debtor's and Reorganized Debtor's rights and defenses under Texas Law and the Bankruptcy Code with respect to this provision of the Confirmation Order, including their right to dispute or object to the Tax Authorities' Claims and liens, are fully preserved.



Employee Claimant nor shall either Senior Employee Claimant be, or be deemed to be, a “Released Party” under the Plan.

**TT. Resolution of Objection of Internal Revenue Service.** Notwithstanding any other provision or term of the Plan or Confirmation Order, the following Default Provision shall control as to the United States of America, Internal Revenue Service (“IRS”) and all of its claims, including any administrative claim (the “IRS Claim”):

(a) Notwithstanding any other provision in the Plan, if the Debtor, the Reorganized Debtor, or any successor in interest fails to pay when due any payment required to be made on federal taxes, the IRS Claim, or other payment required to be made to the IRS under the terms and provisions of this Plan, the Confirmation Order, or the Internal Revenue Code (26 U.S.C.), or fails to timely file any required federal tax return, or if any other event of default as set forth in the Plan occurs, the IRS shall be entitled to give the Debtor, the Reorganized Debtor and/or any successor in interest and their counsel of record, by United States Certified Mail, written notice of the failure and/or default with demand that it be cured, and if the failure and/or default is not cured within 14 days of the date of said notice and demand, then the following shall apply to the IRS:

(1) The administrative collection powers and the rights of the IRS shall be reinstated as they existed prior to the filing of the bankruptcy petition, including, but not limited to, the assessment of taxes, the filing of a notice of Federal tax lien and the powers of levy, seizure, and collection as provided under the Internal Revenue Code;

(2) The automatic stay of 11 U.S.C. § 362 and any injunction of the Plan or in the Confirmation Order shall, with regard to the IRS only, lift or terminate without further notice or hearing by the Bankruptcy Court, and the entire prepetition liability owed to the IRS, together with any unpaid postpetition tax liabilities, may become due and payable immediately; and

(3) The IRS shall have the right to proceed to collect from the Debtor, the Reorganized Debtor or any successor in interest any of the prepetition tax liabilities and related penalties and interest through administrative or judicial collection procedures available under the United States Code as if no bankruptcy petition had been filed and as if no plan had been confirmed.

(b) If the IRS declares the Debtor, the Reorganized Debtor, or any successor-in-interest to be in default of the Debtor’s, the Reorganized Debtor’s and/ or any successor- in-interest’s obligations under the Plan, then entire prepetition liability of an IRS’ Allowed Claim, together with any unpaid postpetition tax liabilities shall become due and payable

immediately upon written demand to the Debtor, Reorganized Debtor and/or any successor-in-interest. Failure of the IRS to declare a failure and/or default does not constitute a waiver by the United States or its agency the IRS of the right to declare that the Debtor, Reorganized Debtor, and/or any successor in interest is in default.

(c) The IRS shall only be required to send two notices of failure and/or default, and upon the third event of a failure and/or default, the IRS shall be entitled to proceed as set out in paragraphs (1), (2), and/or (3) herein above without further notice to the Debtor, the Reorganized Debtor, or any successor in interest, or its counsel. The collection statute expiration date for all unpaid federal tax liabilities shall be extended pursuant to non-bankruptcy law.

(d) The Internal Revenue Service shall not be bound by any release provisions in the Plan that would release any liability of the responsible persons of the Debtor, the Reorganized Debtor, and/or any successor in interest to the IRS. The Internal Revenue Service may take such actions as it deems necessary to assess any liability that may be due and owing by the responsible persons of the Debtor, the Reorganized Debtor and/or any successor in interest to the Internal Revenue Service.

(e) Nothing contained in the Plan or the Confirmation Order shall be deemed to be a waiver or relinquishment of any rights, claims, causes of action, rights of setoff or recoupment, rights to appeal tax assessments, or other legal or equitable defenses that the Debtor or Reorganized Debtor have under non-bankruptcy law in connection with any claim, liability or cause of action of the United States and its agency the Internal Revenue Service.

(f) The term “any payment required to be made on federal taxes,” as used herein above, is defined as: any payment or deposit required by the Internal Revenue Code to be made by the Debtor from and after the Confirmation Date, or the Reorganized Debtor and/or any successor in interest from and after the Effective Date, to the date the IRS Claim is together with interest paid in full. The term “any required tax return,” as used herein above, is defined as: any tax return or report required by the Internal Revenue Code to be made by the Debtor from and after the Confirmation Date, or the Reorganized Debtor and/or any successor in interest from and after the Effective Date, to the date the IRS Claim is together with interest paid in full.

**UU. IRS Proof of Claim.** Notwithstanding anything in the Plan or in this Confirmation Order, until all required tax returns are filed with and processed by the IRS, the IRS’s proof of claim will not be deemed fixed for purposes of Section 502 of the Bankruptcy Code and may be amended in order to reflect the IRS’ assessment of the Debtor’s unpaid priority and general unsecured taxes, penalties and interest.



**ZZ. Miscellaneous.** After the Effective Date, the Debtor or Reorganized Debtor, as applicable, shall have no obligation to file with the Bankruptcy Court or serve on any parties reports that the Debtor or Reorganized Debtor, as applicable, were obligated to file under the Bankruptcy Code or a court order, including monthly operating reports (even for those periods for which a monthly operating report was not filed before the Effective Date), ordinary course professional reports, reports to any parties otherwise required under the “first” and “second” day orders entered in this Chapter 11 Case (including any cash collateral financing orders entered in this Chapter 11 Case) and monthly or quarterly reports for Professionals; *provided, however*, that

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